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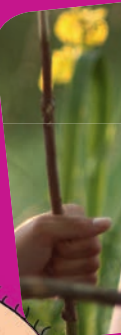
2 nominees for KIDSCREEN AWARDS



Waffle Heart [NRK]



Blime! [NRK]



... and several upcoming programs for children in 2013

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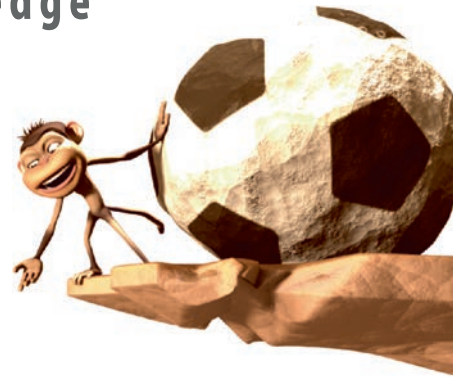
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Furby is back and kids decide if he's Cool or Not?

Cover Our editorial cover features an image from L.A.-based Kid Glove Creative's new animated comedy, *Viking Kong*. International and event copies sport an ad for Atlantica Entertainment's flagship series, *Geronimo Stilton*.



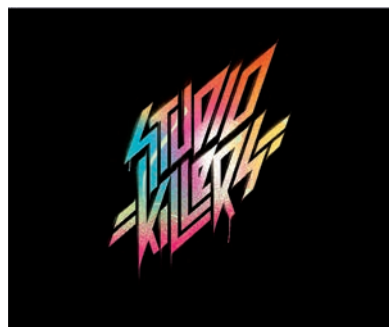
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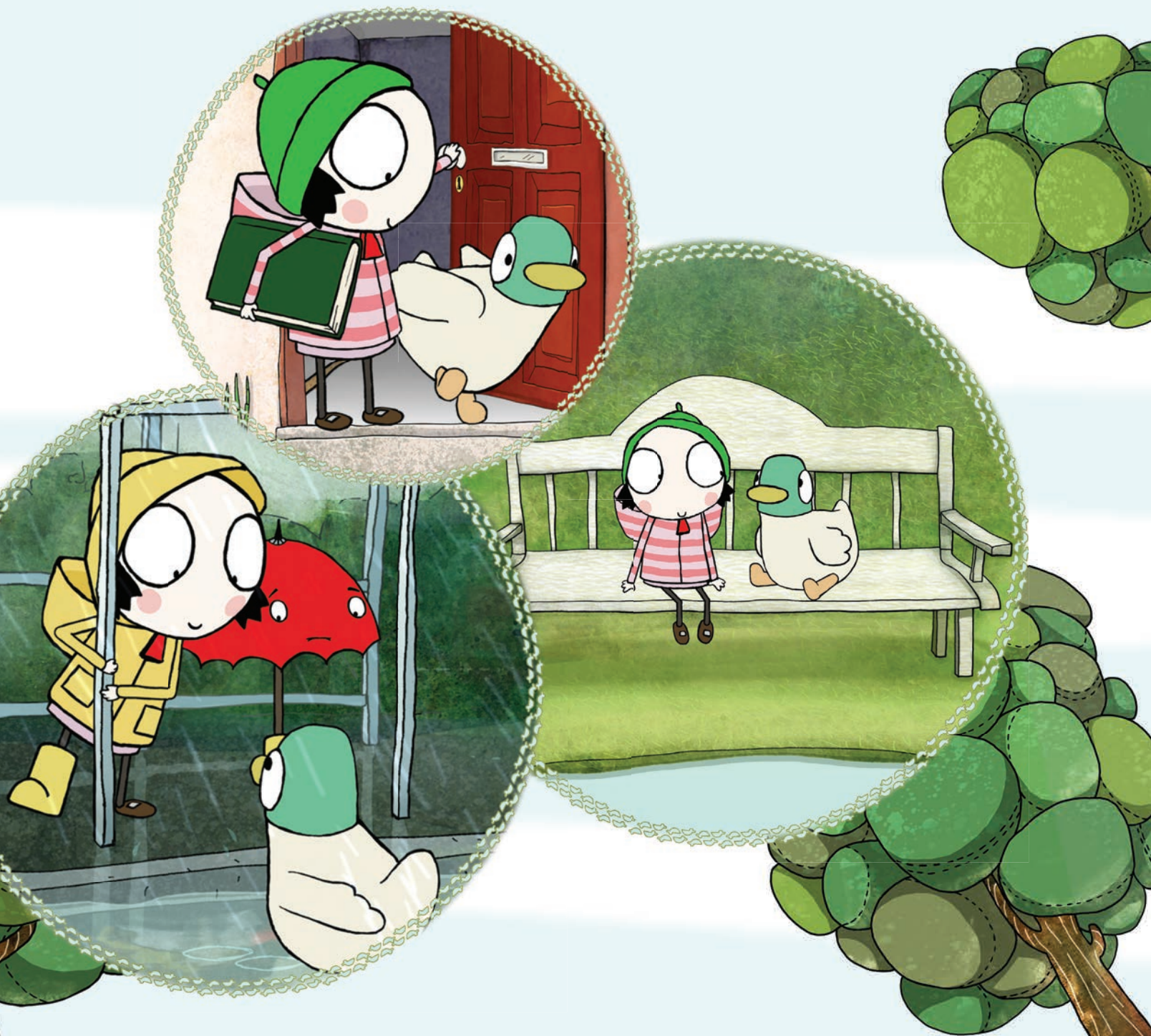
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Not ready for primetime

When compared to print, TV—at roughly 85 years old—is positively new media. So what does that make subscription VOD services that started up less than a decade ago? Infant media, maybe? Anyway, one thing's for certain—this video distribution platform is evolving at a speed never witnessed by its older counterpart, particularly in the US. And what's perhaps more than a bit surprising is how readily SVOD services have embraced children's content as a subscription driver.



Netflix kicked the whole trend off with the launch of its Just for Kids portal in August 2011. Since then, in the US, it's taken Just for Kids onto console gaming platforms and launched a dedicated iPad app. But Just for Kids wasn't left on its own for too long. In fact, the last three months have seen the launch of Toys 'R' Us Movies (October), Hulu Kids (November) and Amazon's Kindle Fire FreeTime Unlimited (December) in the US market, not to mention the July debut of the Family and CBeebies portals on BBC's

Global iPlayer. The last time the kids program distribution space saw that kind of action was during the heady days of cable TV expansion in the late 1990s.

And much like the early days of kid-targeted broadcasting, in which newborn networks filled their airwaves with library programming while ramping up original productions (Cartoon Network and the Hanna-Barbera collection comes to mind), these new services are being built on the back-catalogues of kids TV broadcasters and distributors. In fact, it's fairly widely accepted that the likes of Netflix and Hulu are currently only cutting deals with large distributors or content aggregators—when an “all you can eat” service is available 24/7, its appetite for content is pretty much bottomless.

In the short term, SVOD's insatiability in the kids space has created something of a sales bonanza for those in possession of well-stocked libraries like DHX Media, Warner Bros. and Disney. Additionally the non-exclusive terms of these volume buys make them possible for most distributors, unlike the roadblocks thrown up by myriad rights windows assigned to new, first-run series. As for the long term, it's simply too soon to tell. On the adult programming side, both Netflix and Hulu have started commissioning originals to drive exclusivity. Amazon Studios, for its part, is actively developing kids content, which has yet to go into production. But with this many viable competitors in the same space, I think making original series to establish brand identity and drive eyeballs is where it's headed—just look what happened to kids TV.

What you may find especially interesting in all this is that while I was setting up the conference program for Kidscreen Summit, I met with some roadblocks of my own. Obviously getting to know the people behind these new platforms is a priority for the industry and we wanted to put them in the spotlight at Summit. Those who attend the event this month will get to see the faces behind Amazon Studios' kids business and some of YouTube's power-players. Of course, I also reached out to Netflix, Hulu, Toys 'R' Us Movies and BBC iPlayer. In each case, they were flattered by the invitation but declined, saying they weren't yet ready to discuss their businesses in such a public forum. What that tells me is that we haven't seen anything yet. But don't worry, I'm already on their cases for next year.

Cheers,
Lana

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The List

Five things on our radar this month

1 Video streaming services dedicate more space to kids content



With Amazon's recent entry into dedicated subscription services for kids content, joining the likes of Netflix, Hulu and Barnes & Noble, it's clear streaming companies and online retailers have zeroed in on the potential of feeding childrens' growing multiplatform appetites. Not to be outdone by the influx of rivals, Netflix continues to build its Just For Kids library and has inked new multi-year deals with children's entertainment biggies Disney, Turner Broadcasting and Warner Bros. Amazon's new Kindle FreeTime Unlimited, meanwhile, provides ad-free TV shows, eBooks, games, apps and movies from companies including The House of Mouse and Nickelodeon. Considering Amazon is also diving into the production of kids content, its latest streaming initiative seems like a logical next move. And as more online companies scramble to ink kids content deals, program distributors are likely to get a nice bottom-line boost in the short term. But given the unpredictability and break-neck speed of the SVOD space, we've got to say enjoy the ride while you can.



2 Warner amped for animation

In a move to keep up with competing Hollywood studios and put box-office flops *Happy Feet Two* and *Legend of the Guardians* behind it, Warner Bros. has vowed to improve its toon development with the launch of an animated feature film think tank. The goal is to release one quality feature per year. It won't be easy to catch Disney/Pixar or DreamWorks, but the Looney Tunes studio's first film in the new pipeline, 3D *LEGO Movie*, looks like a solid foundation to build upon..



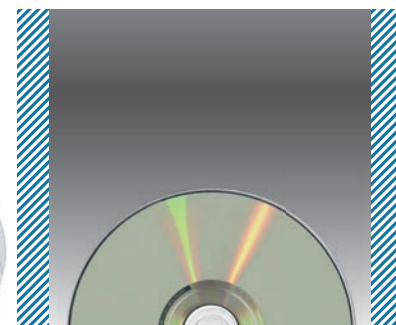
3 Walmart gets more American

Retail behemoth Walmart recently announced its "Made in America" campaign, a US\$50 billion effort to increase its US product sourcing over the next decade. So, the world's largest retailer and private employer in the US is set to drastically increase its domestic spend. Or is it? Critics point out that the initiative is relatively small for a company that generates US\$400 billion each year. Others contend the move could be a "game-changer." But will we have to wait 10 years to find out?




4 Christmas comes to toyland

It appears that the last two weeks of December delivered a long-awaited gift to the US toy industry. According to number-crunchers at The NPD Group, dollar sales were up 18% and unit sales increased by 10% in the US toy sector over the same period in 2011. Overall toy sales for the holiday month topped US\$5 billion for the first time since 2009 and were up 1.3% over last year. Onward and upward!



5 Dark days for DVDs

January was not a good month for CDs and DVDs in the UK. Within the same week, the country's mega entertainment retailers Blockbuster and HMV went into administration. The Blockbuster news, of course, comes two years after a US bankruptcy filing. As the profiles of video streaming services like Netflix and Amazon Instant Video continue to rise, we can only wonder what people are going to do with all those empty DVD racks they have at home.

 To keep up with the news as it happens, check out Kidscreen.com daily.



Helen McAleer has come a long way from the worst job she ever had. “When I was 17, I sold double-glazed windows over the phone,” she recalls. “What I learned is that most people really do not want new windows!” Now at Walker Books, she says it’s the best job of her career and it only continues to get better.



McAleer helped Walker take *Tilly and Friends* from book series to CBeebies commission

Creatively cultivating a multiplatform path

The gig Chief global development officer of The Walker Books Group and MD of Walker Productions, where she leads a global team responsible for shaping the Walker Group companies (UK, US and Australia/New Zealand) and growing their children’s properties including *Tilly and Friends*, *Maisy* and *Guess How Much I Love You?* across multiple platforms. She also supervises all licensing and tie-in publishing for the three companies globally.

Early beginnings Growing up in West Midland, England, McAleer had a passion for books, movies and TV shows like *Thunderbirds* and *The Banana Splits*. She also dreamt of becoming a brain surgeon (who doesn’t?), but eventually went on to earn a B.A. in the history of art, design and film from Sheffield Hallam University. “I would say my schooling leaned more heavily on ‘life learning’ than academic,” she remarks. Always interested in the creative aspect of publishing, McAleer says she had a bit of luck when Random House Children’s Publishing offered her a job in 1990—meaning she could safely put her window-selling days behind her.

Honing skills After serving three years in the marketing department at Random House, she moved to Penguin children’s division Puffin and then to BBC Worldwide in 1994, where she launched the marketing and publicity department for BBC Children’s Books. Twelve years later, McAleer left the company as deputy MD of BBC Children’s consumer products biz to join Walker. She says having the opportunity to work in many different areas of publishing and consumer products has given her a well-rounded point of view. “I advise people to try new things and work in scenarios that, at first, might not necessarily be what you want. I learned so much by doing this.”

Full circle Although she never set out to create her own business, McAleer got Walker Productions off the ground in a matter of months to develop the publisher’s proprietary IPs for other media platforms. After successfully publishing *Tilly and Friends*, the preschool picture book series by author/illustrator Polly Dunbar, McAleer helped land a CBeebies commission for the animated *Tilly and Friends* series co-produced with Ireland’s Jam Media. The show, which debuted on CBeebies in September 2012, has now been sold into 22 territories and has an expanding L&M program in the UK. “It’s been an incredibly positive experience taking *Tilly and Friends*, our first big commission, from page to screen. It tugged on the heartstrings of people,” she says.

Crossing borders McAleer, whose drive for success was first instilled by her hard-working parents, says she wants to grow the business in the future by working with American content. “A lot of projects we’ve worked on come out of the UK, but I want to look at some equally amazing projects published by Candlewick, our sister company in the US,” she explains.

On lessons learned “A good leader is someone who is not afraid to take some risks, is good at listening and keeps their eyes and ears open.” McAleer also stresses the importance of watching how children use media, and always finding a way to connect with them to keep the business moving forward. —Jeremy Dickson

Out of Office

Tales from the frequent fliers club



Chris Nee

Creator/Executive Producer, *Doc McStuffins*

1. In my carry-on you’ll find a laptop, Kindle, iPad, *Vanity Fair*... and Lorazepam for my flying shpikes, which pretty much cancels out use of the first four items.



2. My go-to gadget is a Garmin running watch. It once recorded that I ran from L.A. to Dublin. Was I supposed to turn the GPS off on the plane?

3. On the fly I’ve learned to turn off my GPS on the plane.



4. Preferred in-air tunes “Please Do Not Go” by the Violent Femmes

5. Best in-flight food

A Royal Jordanian business-class flight to the Middle East during Ramadan. What a feast!

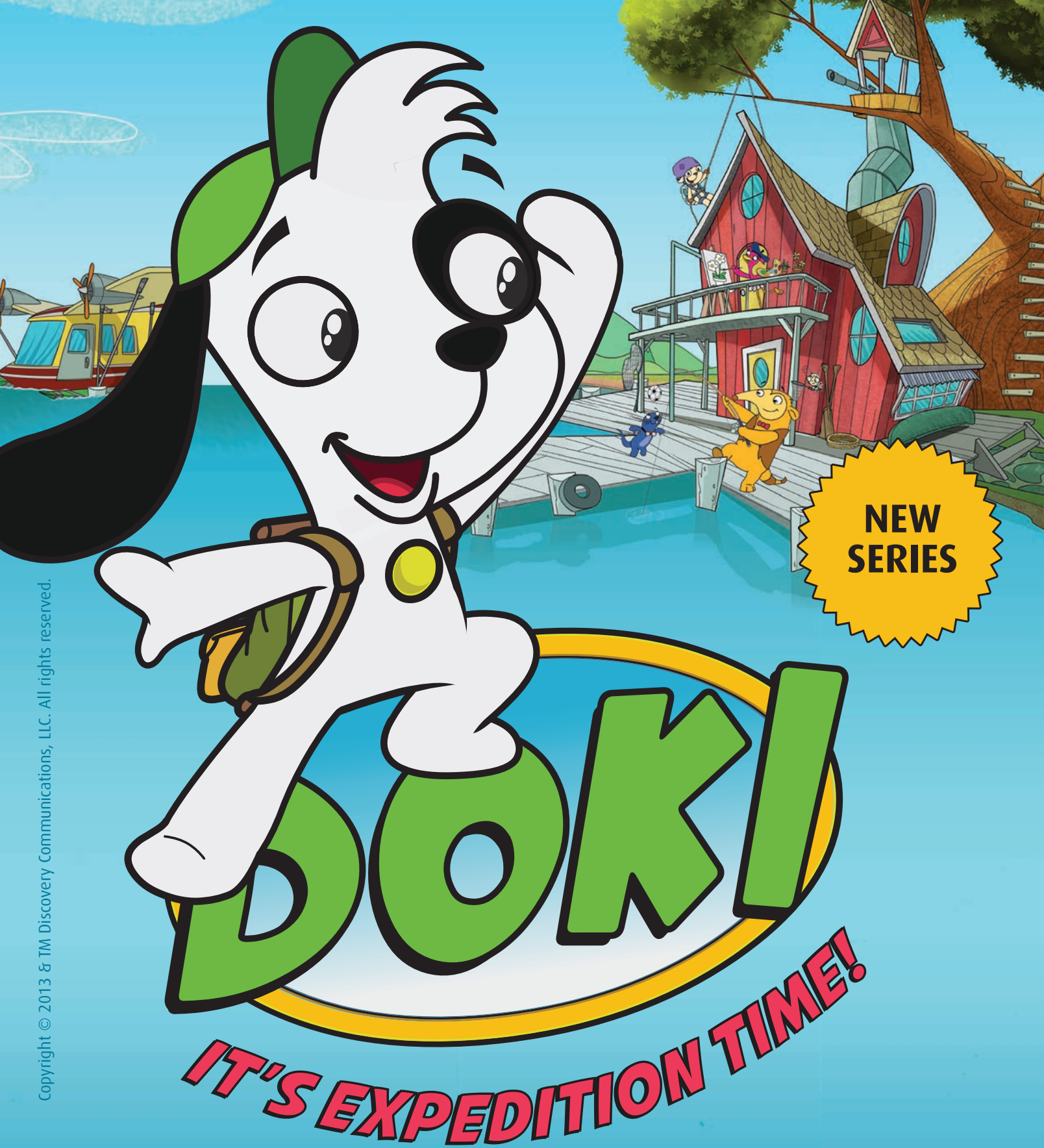
6. Best power-lunch

In Dublin, “eating is cheating.” But if you insist on good food and drink, L. Mulligan Grocer.

7. Window or aisle?

Aisle. I don’t like to be boxed in.

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To Infinity and beyond

With its new integrated gaming system, Disney takes on Skylanders



Like Skylanders, Disney Infinity has a base that's used to transport figurine characters into the gameplay

As momentum builds for toy-integrated gaming products, Disney's Infinity platform made its long-anticipated debut last month. Disney Interactive and Avalanche Software have created an open-ended play model that allows users to interact with Disney and Pixar characters within video games that are compatible with more than 40 collectible physical pieces.

Disney Infinity will launch at US retail in June across Wii, Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, Wii U and 3DS consoles, and will continue to roll out in phases for mobile and online platforms. It's comprised of three games, otherwise known as Play Sets, that include Monsters University, Pirates of the Caribbean and The Incredibles. Of the collectible goods, there will be 17 character figurines that can enter into their corresponding video game through an Infinity Base and, through the new Toy Box feature, can be altered by players on-screen. The Toy Box mode also allows players to have characters from different games interact in a loosely structured environment—picture Jack Sparrow sword fighting Mr. Incredible—and these characters can be upgraded through plastic tokens, called Power Discs, which have tradability written all over them.

"When you look at the success of *Minecraft*, the level of creativity that kids want to interact with is so important, and we will see more and more flexibility from

game creators as time goes on," says John Vignocchi, executive producer at Disney Infinity. With that in mind, he says Infinity is designed to promote continuous play, whether it's within the Toy Box mode or with the collectible physical pieces.

Touted as the House of Mouse's most ambitious gaming initiative to date, Vignocchi says Disney Infinity is a huge cross-collaboration between the consumer products, film, live-action and interactive groups. (The latter has yet to turn a profit since its formation in 2008.)

Inevitably, comparisons are being drawn with Activision's Skylanders gaming juggernaut. Since coming onto the scene in 2011 with *Skylanders: Spyro's Adventure*, the family franchise and its toy-integrated gaming properties have racked up more than US\$500 million in retail sales in the US.

There are some differences, though—the most visible being Infinity's use of the upgradable plastic tokens and the ability to play online. And, of course, Disney is working with pre-existing brand awareness. Whereas Skylanders introduced an original slate of characters and stories, Infinity is banking on the known likeability of its Pixar and Disney animated favorites. How young players interact with the characters in these new formats, however, will all be part of the waiting game.

—Wendy Goldman Getzler

Thunderbirds are Go—again

The Tracy brothers from the classic 1960s "supermarionation" series *Thunderbirds* are blasting back to TV screens in *Thunderbirds are Go!* (working title). The brand new kids series is being co-produced by Thunderbirds' IP owner ITV Studios and New Zealand's Pukeko Pictures.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the property, the 26 x half-hour reinvented series pays tribute to Gerry and Sylvia Anderson's groundbreaking British action-adventure show. It features a different live-action set model in each ep, while CGI-animated characters take the place of marionettes.

Currently in pre-production and set to debut in the UK on ITV and its kids channel CiTV in 2015, *Thunderbirds are Go!* was commissioned by CiTV's head of programming Jamila Metran.

ITV Studios' Estelle Hughes, ITV Studios Global Entertainment's Giles Ridge, and Pukeko Pictures' Richard Taylor and Andrew Smith are on-board to executive produce. Rob Hoegee (*Ben 10*, *Slugterra*) has been brought in as the series' head writer.

After securing worldwide rights to the Thunderbirds IP, ITV Studios Global Entertainment

will handle the planned international distribution of the series and it expects to announce a full new consumer products program based on the new program later this year.

News of the project comes after the recent death of Gerry Anderson, who passed away on December 26, 2012 at the age of 83.

"Gerry was very keen to ensure that there would be a legacy and that the stories and characters he invented across his entire portfolio would keep their appeal for a new generation of kids and adults," says Hughes. —Jeremy Dickson

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Anthony Field (blue)
as the new Wiggles

The Wiggles welcome the next generation

A new cast of performers earns the right to don the group's famously colorful skivvies

After 20 years and 7,000 live performances, iconic Australian kids musical group The Wiggles announced some big changes last year, namely the retirement of original members Greg Page, Murray Cook and Jeff Fatt. But The Wiggles will continue with a whole new cast in 2013. Along with the first-ever female Wiggle, Emma Watkins, Simon Pryce and Lachlan Gillespie are joining the group's creator Anthony Field to entertain the next generation of preschoolers around the globe.

The Wiggles recently wrapped an emotional 2012 celebratory world tour that introduced the new lineup and bid adieu to Page, Cook and Fatt. Deciding to devote more time to their kids, friends and families after years of life on the road, the original Yellow, Red and Purple Wiggles gracefully handed over their famous skivvies to the newbies (all of whom have all previously appeared with the group). However, the ex-Wiggles will continue to write and record songs and be involved in the behind-the-scenes business of the popular entertainment brand that, to date, has sold 23 million DVDs and seven million CDs worldwide.

"The Wiggles have been an amazing success story that grew out of very humble beginnings at Macquarie University, where Anthony met Greg and Murray while taking early childhood studies," says the group's longtime MD Paul Field, brother to Anthony.

"What the guys did was quite unique because they are all musicians. In the early years, we could do acoustic shows in the smallest of venues if we needed to. It gave us flexibility."

As global demand for the group increased, so did its touring schedule and cross-platform expansion. The Wiggles now perform more than 200 well-oiled shows annually across four continents. Its performances air on TV in more than 120 countries, and the group also hosts *Wiggly Waffle* on 24-hour US preschool net Sprout.

"With the new lineup, we need to shoot an entirely new TV series, so we're talking with our national broadcaster, ABC Australia, and we've spoken to our overseas partners about being involved in a co-production. We expect to shoot in June this year," says Field.

In the interim, the new Wiggles recently shot more than 25 interstitials with a crowd-sourced group of preschoolers and their parents/caregivers at Hot Potato Studios, The Wiggles' Sydney-based sound stage and recording facility. The interstitials are scheduled to start airing sometime this month.

According to Field, the group has also banked two albums worth of new material recorded over the last six months, and enough performance footage to fill two DVDs. The first release featuring the new lineup is slated for May 2013.

Additional plans for this year include the launch of plush products and musical instruments from Wicked Cool Toys (the IP's new master toy partner for North America and Australia), a North American tour, and a Halloween-themed CD and DVD launch that will be the group's first concurrent global release.

The brand has also expanded digitally with storybook apps from US-based Ruckus Media and a new Sirius satellite radio show that debuted last November.

As a new generation of preschoolers gets acquainted with the reinvented Wiggles, Field says the group has come full circle. "Young children who saw our shows back in the early '90s are now bringing their children to the shows. It's a real testament to the longevity of the group." —Jeremy Dickson



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HotStuff

Getting personal

The creative minds behind JibJab take story personalization to a new level with StoryBots

What StoryBots is a new multi-platform entertainment and educational property for kids ages two to six and their parents. It launched last September and features curious and colorful characters in personalized eBooks, online videos, activity sheets and mobile apps. Developed by brothers Gregg and Evan Spiridellis, well-known as the co-creators of popular web entertainment brand JibJab (This Land political parody videos, Elf Yourself eCards), the property aims to make learning more fun for kids while enhancing the parenting experience.

A new Sesame? After growing JibJab from a business operated out of their garage in Brooklyn to a thriving Venice Beach, California-based company with 45 full-time employees, The Spiridellis brothers became fathers. With five kids between them, the siblings decided to use their expertise in animation, storytelling and JibJab's proprietary Starring You personalization technology to create new products their kids would love. "As parents, if you have tablets and iPhones around the house it's hard not to notice how absolutely enthralled and adept kids are at a very young age with this technology," says Gregg Spiridellis. "So we asked ourselves, 'If *Sesame Street* were created today in this world of connected, portable devices, what would it look like?' That was the seed that sprouted StoryBots."

New formats Full development of StoryBots characters and themed applications started roughly 13 months ago. For iOS, *StoryBots Starring You StoryBooks* is a free iPad app currently available on the App Store that lets parents create personalized, animated eBooks that include their child's name and face in the stories. Launched last March for the iPhone, *StoryBots Beep & Boop* is a motivational reward app that turns learning good behavior into a game for kids. Parents can give their kids Beeps for good behavior and Boops as reprimands. "The app turns something that is not very much fun, the correction of bad behavior, into something a little bit lighter, which takes some of the stress out of that part of parenting," says Gregg. Since the app was released, parents in 89 countries worldwide have sent more than 250,000 Beeps and Boops. StoryBots products for the web include *StoryBots Starring You Band*, a free video series that lets parents insert their kids directly into music videos with the StoryBot characters via a photo-uploading tool; and *StoryBots ABC Jamboree*, a collection of free 26 x one-minute music videos designed to help kids recognize the sounds and shapes of the letters in the alphabet.

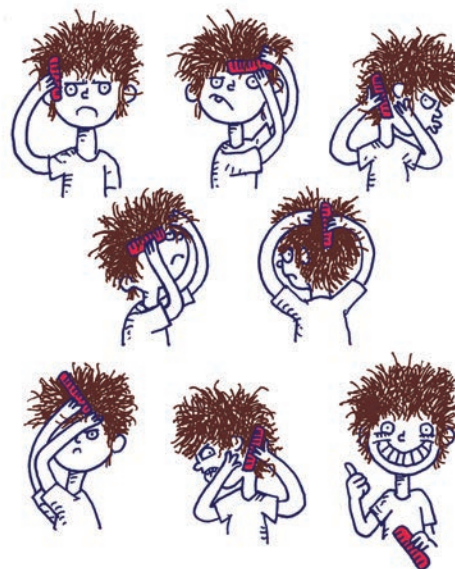
Next moves As the franchise continues to gain traction, Spiridellis says plans are in the works to port *Starring You Band* and the initial ABC videos, currently exclusive to the web, over to iOS devices this year. "We'll also launch a character-based episodic web series in 2013," he says. "The web is an amazing testing ground to evolve a property with your audience. I'm sure three years from now the StoryBots will look nothing like they did when we first launched them." —Jeremy Dickson



Gregg (left) and Evan (right) Spiridellis get spontaneous with the StoryBots, original characters that help make the learning experience more fun for kids and parents across platforms

Know your audience

By Jim Benton



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BEYOND

With more than 20 years of licensing experience in tow, former Nickelodeon Consumer Products president **Leigh Anne Brodsky** has made the move to Iconix Brand Group to serve as MD of Peanuts Worldwide. She will head up global business for the Peanuts property, including the launch of the recently announced 2015 feature film from Twentieth Century Fox and Blue Sky Studios. Brodsky's other responsibilities include overseeing and growing the Iconix Entertainment division. She was most recently an acting member of the Board of Directors at Jakks Pacific and president of L.A.B. Licensing and Brand-

its recent restructure from divisional to geographic lines of management.

Also being welcomed into a newly created position is **Stephen Gould [A]** at Ragdoll Worldwide. The company has hired the former principal at brand and licensing consultancy Bear Conran to serve as its new commercial director. Based at Pinewood Studios in the UK, Gould will head up worldwide licensing efforts around Ragdoll properties including *In the Night Garden*, *Teletubbies*, *Dipdap* and *The Adventures of Abney & Teal*. The kids entertainment exec also previously held a senior consultant role at

company's Board of Directors. At HIT, Desai managed the company's day-to-day operations, including business development and global brand management, and had global responsibility for revenue functions including TV, brands, consumer products, DVD, and live events/attractions. She also managed offices in London, New York, Hong Kong and Tokyo.

Also in Europe, **Bettina Koeckler [C]** has been tapped by Twentieth Century Fox Consumer Products to lead its European licensing business as SVP of EMEA. The appointment is timed with Fox's efforts to further extend brands

new licensing agency in the Benelux. The new company, which specializes in licensing, marketing and brand management, is working with a number of popular kids character IPs including Snoopy, Paul Frank, *The Little Prince* and Mouk. Beck is the former director of CPLG, a role she held for 20 years ending in October 2011. Mulder was most recently the owner and kids marketing specialist of her own company, Mulder TMC, and was previously a marketing director at CPLG and marketing manager at Hasbro.

On the publishing front, HarperCollins Children's Books UK has welcomed **Ruth Alltimes**

Center for Children and Media (ACCM) in Chicago, and New York-based independent media producer **Dr. Alice Wilder** have been named senior follows by The Fred Rogers Center for Early Learning and Children's Media at Saint Vincent College. According to The Fred Rogers Center executive director Rita Catalano, Kleeman and Wilder will play crucial roles contributing to the new Fred Rogers Center blog. As president of ACCM, Kleeman heads up an executive roundtable of children's media industry leaders and develops and executes a range of professional development services for television, digital

people



ing, and at Nickelodeon she worked on a number of hit kids IPs including *SpongeBob SquarePants* and *Dora the Explorer*.

In other consumer products news, the chief brands officer position at BBC Worldwide has been filled by **Amanda Hill**, a BBC exec who served as MD of BBC Earth. She is now joining a senior executive team and is tasked with creating an overall global strategy for 14 BBC Worldwide brands, including popular kids diginet *CBeebies*, as well as *Global iPlayer*, *Top Gear*, *BBC Earth* and *Doctor Who*. She will also be responsible for developing new BBC brands for future revenue growth. BBC Worldwide created the new position as part of

RDF Media Group (now Zodiak Entertainment), was co-managing director at 4Kids Entertainment International did executive stints at Kids Industries, Active Licensing Europe (formerly Saban Consumer Products), Fox Kids Europe and HIT Entertainment.

Meanwhile, an ex-HIT exec is ordering new business cards. Former COO **Sangeeta Desai [B]** has joined production giant FremantleMedia in the combined role of COO and CFO. In her new post, Desai will be responsible for the management of FremantleMedia's operations in its London corporate center, including financial performance, legal and business affairs, IT, purchasing and procurement, and property. Desai will also sit on the

such as *The Simpsons* and *Family Guy* in the region. Koeckler is the co-chair of LIMA's global marketing and membership committee and brings with her more than 18 years of experience across B2B and consumer licensing, as well as merchandising. Her previous experience includes a six-year stint as VP of licensing for Sony Pictures Consumer Products. She was most recently SVP and GM for global consumer products at European production company Rainbow, and served as SVP for EMEA licensing at Chorion prior to that.

Staying in the licensing world, former CPLG licensing and marketing specialists **Monique Beck** and **Jannienke Mulder** have opened J&M Brands, a

as its new publishing director of fiction. Alltimes, formerly the publishing director of fiction at Macmillan Children's Books, will report to HarperCollins' fiction and licensed properties director Rachel Denwood. Also working alongside publishing director Nick Lake, Alltimes will be tasked with expanding the market's children's fiction list through new acquisitions and the development of existing authors' properties and series. In her 12-year publishing career, Alltimes has worked with brands including *Rainbow Magic*, *Chris Riddell* and *Alyson Noel*.

Back in the US, meanwhile, **David Kleeman [D]**, president of the American

media, research, education and child development specialists. He also serves as Governor of the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences, repping the Children's Programming Peer Group and is an education committee member of the Television Academy Foundation. Wilder is co-creator and head of research and education for literacy-based preschool series *Super Why!*, executive producer of *Cha-Ching: Money Smart Kids*, and chief content officer of *Speakaboos*. She is also currently a member of the advisory board for The Sandbox Summit and was a producer and director of research and development for *Blue's Clues*, *Little Bill* and *Oswald* on Nick Jr.

For more People Moves, head over to kidscreen.com/category/people-moves

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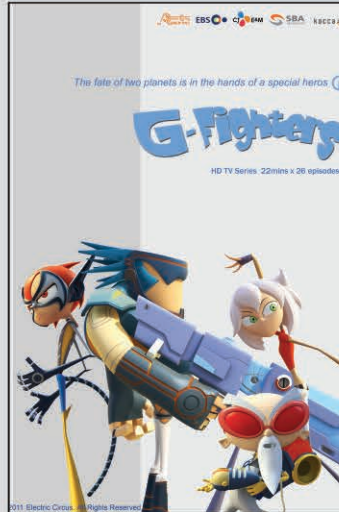
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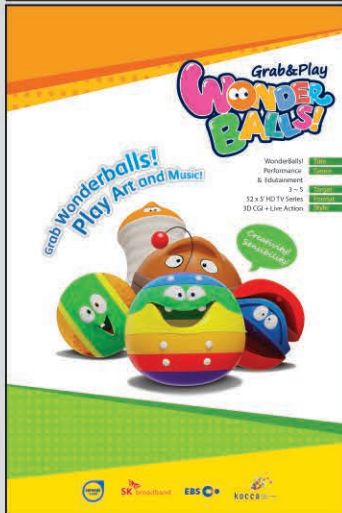
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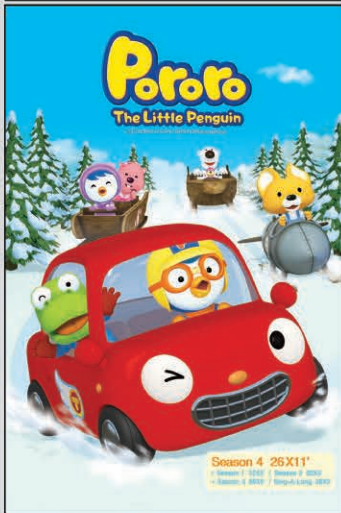
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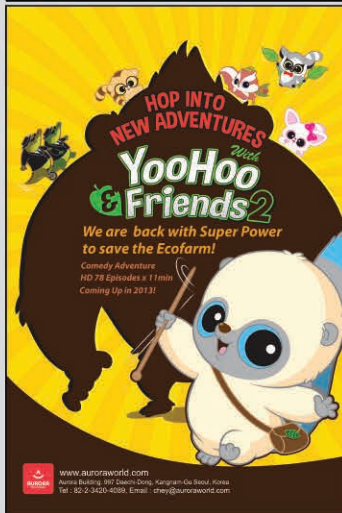
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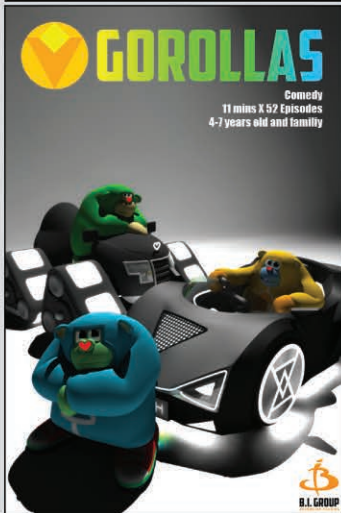
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As part of Hasbro's push into Asia, it's the first US company to secure a deal under Malaysia's new tax incentive program for the second season of *Transformers: RescueBots*



Hasbro hits its stride

The toyco-come-content company is aggressively pushing into more markets as it rolls out new brands

BY BRENDAN CHRISTIE

When Hasbro amalgamated its content initiatives, including feature films and TV, under Hasbro Studios president Stephen Davis in mid-December, it represented the final stage of the company's evolution from toyco to entertainment company. It also marked the end of a transformation that began in 2009 when Hasbro established a studio of its own and formed its US joint-venture network, The Hub.

With anchor brands such as *Transformers*, *My Little Pony* and *Littlest Pet Shop*, which span the world of TV, toys and consumer products licensing, being joined by *Transformers Rescue Bots* and *Kaijudo: Rise of the Duel Masters* (both as a trading card game and TV series) and others, evidence suggests that Hasbro is just getting warmed up on the content front.

But there are certainly also other indications that the company has no intention of resting on its recent laurels.

Thinking globally

Hasbro's entrée into the world of programming has come with a global mandate. The company has started selling to and working with partners throughout Eastern Europe and Asia. But perhaps most interesting is its growing interactions with China.

It's not surprising that any kids company would target the Chinese market, given the country's 400 million children

under the age of 14. And many have certainly tried making in-roads, with varying degrees of success. Mattel, for example, notably opened and shuttered a luxury Barbie retail store in Shanghai over the course of just 24 months.

However, most are reformulating their strategies to crack the code that exists among Chinese parents, where educational activities are often ranked higher than play, and books are the go-to leisure activity for kids.

That may be about to change. China has a rapidly growing middle class, and some are betting that Chinese parents will loosen up as they accrue more money and free time.

Retailer Toy 'R' Us, for example, recently indicated that it planned to substantially increase its presence in the market, in the hopes of extracting even greater returns, leading with educational toys sold from smaller stores.

For its part, Hasbro has chosen to make its move with the assistance of local experts. Notably, the company has started working with Toonmax (a part of China's Shanghai Media Group) on a media manifestation for its iconic Play-Doh brand, a popular toy in the territory that afforded the company a logical stepping stone. Called *Pei Le Doh*, the 26 x 11-minute preschool series will be filmed completely in China and then dubbed into English for the international market.

A mix of live-action and animation, *Pei Le Doh* centers around the adventures of Dodo and his friend Elf. Dodo lives with his grandfather, but the pair ends up travelling to Peile Valley, a magical land where the boys solve problems, have

adventures and come up against resident baddie, Zalazar. An easily adapted preschool format—just reshoot the live-action sequences and dub the animation into the appropriate language—*Pei Le Doh* is only one of several new forays into Asia for Hasbro.

Hasbro Studios was also the first US company to secure a deal under the terms of Malaysia's new tax incentive program by agreeing to produce the second season of *Transformers: Rescue Bots* with Kuala Lumpur-based Vision Animation and Australia's Moody Street Kids. It is also doing a version of its established live-action series *Family Game Night* with Toonmax.

"There is real focus on Asian expansion," observes SVP of international distribution and development Finn Arnesen. "Just as we have expanded into Russia, Turkey and Eastern Europe, as well."

Digital frontiers

Arnesen is thinking digitally as much as he is geographically of late, and he asserts that owners need to consider launching their brands in digital forms when they lend themselves to the medium.

Perhaps as an early indicator, Hasbro announced a deal last year that would see 10 established series made available on the Netflix Just for Kids platform, including *JEM*, *Transformers: Generation 1*, *G.I. Joe: Real American Heroes*, *Beast Wars: Transformers* and *Transformers: Rescue Bots*.

Arnesen won't tip his hand and reveal what new deals might be in the works, but will say that Hasbro is exploring possibilities with major players in the space.

"It all becomes about the platforms you have access to, and the rights you hold, and who you work with," he notes. "And it's happening faster than I would have predicted. I was giving it another couple of years to break through, but now I think that timeline has been accelerated in certain markets."

Transformers, roll out

As for Hasbro's established stable of series, which drive the programming on its US joint-venture network The Hub, the 13 episodes of *Transformers Prime Beast Hunters* due to launch this year represent the final chapter of the *Transformers Prime* story. It has grown to encompass 65 half-hour episodes that continue to roll out around the world. Look for a 75-minute *Transformers Prime Beast Hunters* movie to hit DVD shelves in Q4.

But that's not the end for Transformers. Arnesen says a "new iteration of the animated TV series" is slated for delivery in late 2014, which looks like it might be shaping up to be the year of the Autobots, given that audiences are already expecting the fourth live-action blockbuster in July.

Pony express

With series three hitting this year, *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* will also reach the critical 65 x half-hour mark. Arnesen calls *My Little Pony* a "top-priority" brand, so expect the series to continue to explore new themes and storylines until Twilight Sparkle retires to her paddock. A new companion



As *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic* reaches the 65-ep mark, the series is set to spawn spin-off *Equestria Girls*, in which the ponies take on human form

series called *Equestria Girls* is set to air this spring, sending the pony heroes on a mission to a new world where they take on human form.

Setting up shop


Hasbro's third production pillar comes in the form of *Littlest Pet Shop*. The challenge with this brand, notes Arnesen, was "how do we take a huge collection of pets and make them into a TV show?" Finding the right answer took time.

The central character of the new show is Blythe (herself a classic collectible fashion doll from the '60s), who has moved into an apartment in the city with her father. On the bottom floor of the building is the *Littlest Pet Shop*, where all the pets go during the day when their owners are away. By some twist of fate, however, it turns out Blythe can talk to the animals and vice versa.

"It is intrinsically the story of this tween girl Blythe, who is starting a new school, making friends and trying to avoid the mean girls, and whose father happens to run the largest-ever pet shop over the road," notes Arnesen.

Besides Blythe, the characters will include Zoe the doggy diva, Russell the hedgehog and iconic panda Penny Ling from the collectible toy series. The show will launch in some markets in April, but the main global rollout is planned for Q4.

Traditionally, girls have tended to watch animation until roughly age seven or eight, when they switch to entry-level live action and then move on to more sophisticated fare. But Arnesen believes this has as much to do with a lack of girl-focused programming choices as it does with patterns of developmental behavior.

"What we're trying to do here," he says, "is make a show that is intelligent and a slightly more sophisticated adventure-comedy. We're trying to make something a little more clever and fashion-involved so we can explore that world and do more with it online." 



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KidsCo gets a new look

A fresh branding campaign and new shows are on the menu for the refocused pan-regional channel

The challenge Though KidsCo launched a little over five years ago, in many ways it's a whole new channel since it became a joint-venture between NBC Universal and Corus Entertainment last May. While the partners spent much of 2012 working out the internal structure, this year started with an outward-facing bang, as an updated look and a new approach to the schedule hit its airwaves last month.

A fresh face "We've been on the air five years now with our original feed, and it was time for a refresh," says MD Hendrik McDermott. "We want to start competing properly. We want to really declare to the audience that we are serious about upping this channel. I think the most effective, immediate way to do that is visually, and then we'll back the new look up with a programming investment."

KidsCo is a channel aimed at six- to 10-year-olds, which McDermott says is a strong point of differentiation. But it's the channel's approach that he believes is key.

"One of our core values," he notes, "is providing a safe and non-violent environment for children. I have children myself and I don't often feel comfortable putting them in front of [some] channels. We have invested considerable time in compliance editing and in our acquisitions strategy, trying to make sure that we provide an environment parents feel comfortable with."

The dayparts Though it's a 24-hour offering, KidsCo's main programming day runs between 6:00 a.m. and about 10:00 p.m. and is roughly divided into three parts. Before

school, the channel looks to capture six- to 10-year-olds, but when they are out of the house it switches to preschoolers. After-school hours

are a dedicated co-viewing zone for parents with children in the lower end of the six to 10 bracket. (As McDermott points out, "Let's face it, by the time they are 10 years old, kids are off doing their own thing much more often.")

The programming When it comes to programming, KidsCo is able to draw upon the considerable resources of its partners NBC Universal and Corus/Nelvana. But the channel has also started investing in original programming, most recently with NBC entity Matchbox Pictures in Australia to make short-form series *Zuzu and the Supernuffs*. Notes McDermott, "I think we want to have more original programming, but we don't want to just jump in head-first. It will be a concerted strategy to continually build up our original programming portfolio."

So, look for KidsCo to acquire some of what it needs. McDermott says his priorities are diversity of content (both in country of origin and animation style), and "responsible content that fits with the brand."

Next moves The early part of 2013 will be spent working with KidsCo's affiliate partners, helping them create bespoke marketing programs that educate consumers about the channel and brand, but also reconnecting with them after the shift in management.

"We spent some time on the road last year, but I think this year will be a lot of connecting with our partners and ensuring that we are delivering the channel that they are looking for," says McDermott. —Brendan Christie



Visual Appeal

MD Hendrik McDermott says the net wants to be a safe place for kids, which is reflected in KidsCo's new channel branding. The logo and idents now feature lots of spheres and balloons that are intended to create a softer impression. The net's new signature colors are a little more muted, with blues and oranges dominating.

Musically inclined

McDermott says the channel also spent a great deal of time finding the right voice-over artists and music to brand its dayparts. "We tailored them towards the audience we think is watching at that time," he says. "So during the preschool time, we have more motherly voices. But during the core kids target zone, we have a faster-paced music—but always with a lighthearted approach that fits with our safe environment."



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40 x 22 minutes



66 x 22 minutes



52 x 22 minutes

9story
ENTERTAINMENT



HIP is looking to acquire three to four shows a year for distribution—its lineup now includes *Sixteen South's* preschool series *Driftwood Bay*

Henson gets more HIP

The prodco's Henson Independent Properties expands from consumer products into third-party distribution, picking up three new projects

With only a show bible and a small animation sample, Belfast, Ireland's SixteenSouth Television made a big splash this past MIP Junior with its new mixed-media preschool series *Driftwood Bay*. The story of a five-year-old girl who creates fantastic adventures inspired by the flotsam and jetsam she finds along the beach, *Driftwood Bay* promises to be something quite unique.

"From the moment you see it, you realize that it's very special," affirms Richard Goldsmith, EVP of global distribution at The Jim Henson Company. And, he notes, it was the perfect addition to the Henson portfolio—something he wouldn't have been able to say before last summer, when the company decided it was going to distribute third-party content.

"Henson had a history of representing other brands in its consumer products division," explains Goldsmith. "And years ago we created a label called HIP—Henson Independent Properties. We decided to expand that into media distribution so that we could become a full-service distributor."

Driftwood Bay is actually Henson's third acquisition. The company got the ball rolling with The Collective's *Annoying Orange* and a second acquisition that it has yet to announce.

"We have acquired three series pretty quickly, and our goal is to acquire three or four a year. But it will really depend on whether we can find series that are extraordinary."

That's really the key for Goldsmith. In order to maintain Henson's global reputation, the acquisitions have to be especially noteworthy.

"When I see a brand or a new series that inspires me, I get this little tingling in my spine," admits Goldsmith. "And you don't get that sensation more than a couple

of times per year. So it is really going to depend on how much I tingle.

"We have already reached out very quietly to studios and production companies we want to work with and have told them we would like to distribute their content and see what's coming down their pipeline as early as possible."

And why wouldn't producers be interested? Besides the weight added by attaching the Henson name to a project, the company also already boasts a distribution organization that sells on multiple platforms to more than 200 countries and can support sales with business and legal affairs, marketing, traffic and fulfillment capabilities.

Goldsmith says the company is interested in fielding ideas at any stage, provided they bring something special to the table. Henson can marry producers to animation and co-pro partners, help find financing or even take on completed projects. Goldsmith says he also wants his producers to have a seat at the table, so that they are involved in the decisions that affect their creations.

And he is not looking for any particular type of project, or to simply check boxes. "It's not slate-driven," he observes. "We don't think that way. It is absolutely project-driven."

Goldsmith is in regular contact with top television buyers around the world. "One of the questions that I always ask them is: 'What do you need?'" That knowledge will help us fill the slate," he concedes. "But if people aren't looking for a great preschool show and [another] *Driftwood Bay* comes along, we are still going to do [it] because it's all about great content. That is really what is driving the selection process." —Brendan Christie

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Free-to-air channels rule in South Africa

With limited access to pay-TV, four to 14s rely on the country's terrestrial nets to get their TV fix

While the digital switchover is slated for 2015, free-to-air currently rules in South Africa when it comes to capturing viewers ages four to 14. In fact, according to TV research manager Johanna Karsenty of Paris-based Eurodata TV Worldwide, as of 2011, a full 76.5% of households in South Africa received only analogue TV signals.

For November 2012, Eurodata's ratings placed public broadcaster SABC in the lead in the race to attract the four to 14s, with the channel taking three of the top four spots in terms of market share. SABC1 holds the highest share at 28.5%, while SABC2 came in third with 15.5% and SABC3 was fourth with 9.2%. The best-performing block among the SABC channels is SABC2's weekday slot (4 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.) at 21.9% over the first half of 2012.

e-TV, the first privately owned free-to-air channel in the country, attained the second-best market share at 20.7% and from January to June last year, it had the most popular children's block on weekday afternoons (2:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.), holding down a 27% market share. The channel's Saturday morning block (6:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m.) is also popular, taking a 23.5% share of this demo.

In terms of individual series performance, SABC1's local live-action youth series *Soul Buddyz* a the clear winner. It was the most popular children's show from January to June 2012, drawing 1.1 million viewers ages four to 14 on average for a market share of 42.1%. The program's stand-alone 7 p.m. timeslot certainly helped it achieve much higher ratings than other shows grouped in kid-targeted blocks. Endemol's preschool series *Bananas in Pyjamas*, meanwhile, captured the second spot on e-TV's morning block with an average of 525,800 viewers and a 38.8% market share while *Dragonball Z* on SABC2's weekday slot placed third with 426,400 viewers and a market share of 33.1%.

Additional top-ranked spots were occupied by international animated and live-action series such as *Batman the Brave and the Bold* (SABC2), *LazyTown* (e-TV) and *AI Football GGO* (e-TV).

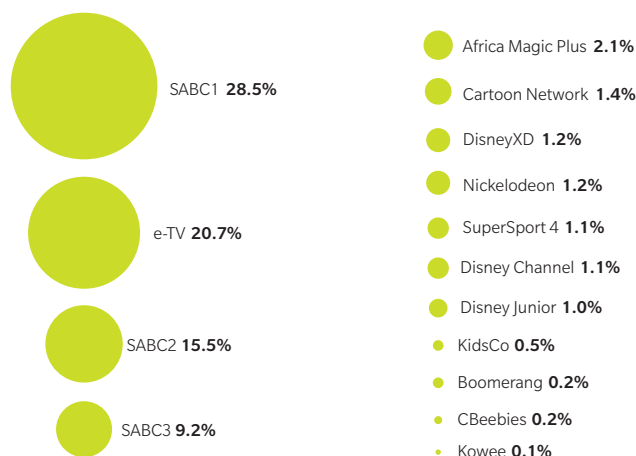
Despite pay-TV's relatively small slice of the four to 14 pie, Disney has made the biggest progress since launching in the country in 2011. Disney Channel, Disney XD and Disney Junior combined drew 3.3% of the total kids audience in November 2012, although Cartoon Network (1.4%) edged Disney XD (1.2%) for sixth spot.

The top three shows among the children's specialty channels were all Disney XD series. Overall ratings champ *Suite Life on Deck* attracted 44,400 viewers on average for a 3.1% market share. *Lab Rats* clutched second spot, and *Quad Cup* came in third. Cartoon Network's *Thundercats* was the top show not airing on Disney XD, placing eighth. —Jeremy Dickson



Endemol's *Bananas in Pyjamas* scores big ratings for e-TV's popular weekday preschool block

Market share Children 4 to 14



Eurodata TV Worldwide is a French company specializing in TV audience ratings research and market intelligence that offers TV data as well as expertise and insight into the performance of TV shows in more than 90 countries. Ratings information is provided directly by research institutes in each country, which, like Eurodata's parent company Médiamétrie, measure daily television audience ratings. For more information, contact sales manager Jacques Balducci (jbalducci@eurodatatv.com, 33-1-4758-9434).

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TRITANS 2 is the second season of an original 3D animation series that utilises Mo-Cap. The story revolves around three superheroes kids, who battle old and new enemies.

MONSTROU STUDIO PTE LTD has been an independent producer and distributor of original content and distributor of its own titles since August 2008. It has two inter-dependent teams with dual capabilities in both live-action TV media and 3D animation productions.

Tel: +65 6634 0811
Email: kenneth@monstrou.com

Produced by Monstrou Studio Pte Ltd Distributed by Monstrou Studio Pte Ltd Genre: Sci-Fi Kids CGI Animation
Format: 13 episodes x 23 mins, SD Language: English/Malay



ROB THE ROBOT (SEASON 2) This 3D-animated TV series transports preschoolers to a fun-filled robot galaxy with new and exciting planets.

ONE ANIMATION is an independent 3D animation and visual effects studio merging experience and the ability to produce quality films and TV series at lower costs.

Tel: +65 6273 1785
Email: bisdev@oneanimation.com

Produced by One Animation Genre: Children 3-6 Format: 52 episodes x 11 mins, HD, 360 Language: English



ELLA BELLA BINGO (SERIES 1 AND 2) is about the charismatic and creative five-year-old Ella and the playful kids and eccentric adults in her life.

AUGUST MEDIA HOLDINGS creates and manages high-quality intellectual properties for kids, families and youth for all media including TV, film, publishing, mobile and interactive platforms.

Tel: +65 6592 0577
Email: sales@augustrights.com

Produced by Kool Produktion (Series 1), Red Kite Animation and Kool Produktion (Series 2)
Distributed by August Rights Genre: Preschool storytelling Format: 26 episodes x 7 mins, HD,
Language: English, Norwegian, Danish, Swedish, Hebrew



DANA & FRIENDS is a funny and educational animation series that follows the character-driven adventures of five preschoolers as they get in and out of trouble.

KINDERNOMICS is a media, technology and education company. Beyond animation for children, they also integrate on-air and online content and develop multi-platform content.

Tel: +65 6591 8748
Email: yun@kindernomics.com

Produced by Kindernomics Distributed by Kindernomics Genre: Preschool Education Format: Series of 3 to 4-mins Animated Shorts, HD
Language: English



DREAM DEFENDERS is a CGI action-comedy series, targeted at children 6 to 12 years, that chronicles the adventures of twins Zane and Zoey.

TINY ISLAND PRODUCTIONS is Singapore's leading stereoscopic 3D CG animation company. Its current productions include TV and film projects produced in collaboration with partners from Japan, Korea, Thailand and Hong Kong.

Tel: David Kwok, +65 9693 3870
Email: davidk@tinyisland.net

Produced by Tiny Island Productions Distributed by Classic Media Genre: Action-Comedy, CGI, Animation
Format: 26 episodes x 22 mins, HD, Stereoscopic 3D Language: English



BUG BUDDIES is a comedy-action series for children aged 6-12; six extraordinary bug detectives solve mysteries in a bug-sized world.

ONE ANIMATION is an independent 3D animation and visual effects studio merging experience and the ability to produce quality films and TV series at lower costs.

Tel: +65 6273 1785
Email: bisdev@oneanimation.com

Produced by One Animation Genre: Comedy-action animation series Format: 52 episodes x 11 mins, HD Language: English

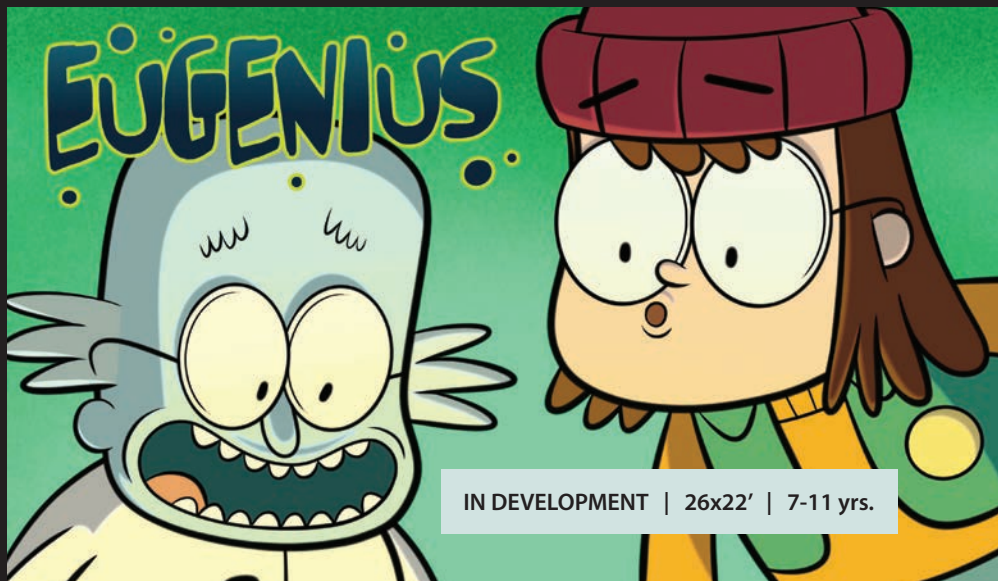


WENDY charts the adventures of teenage heroine Wendy and her equestrian-centred life on a stud farm complete with gossip, friendships and romances.

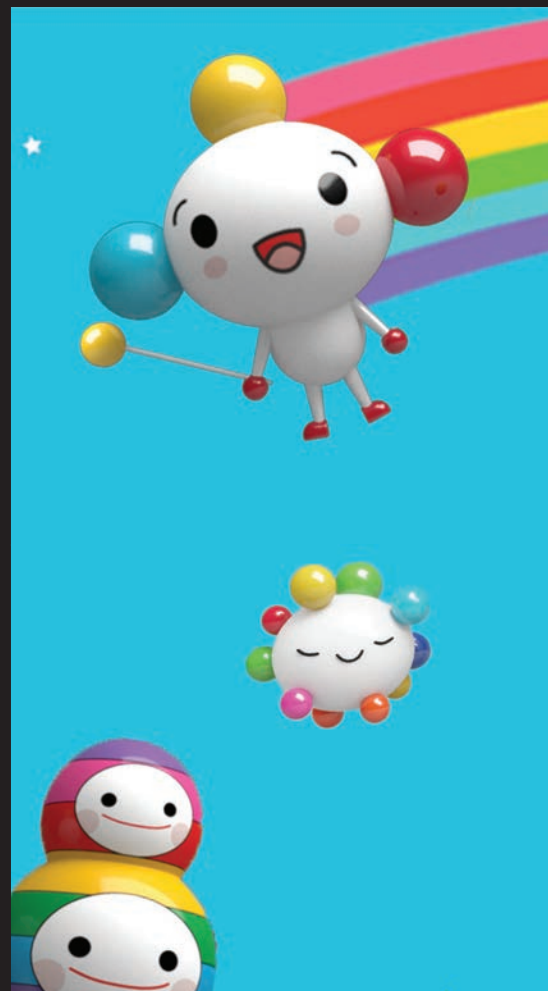
AUGUST MEDIA creates and manages high-quality content for TV, film, publishing, mobile and interactive platforms.

Tel: +65 6592 0577
Email: norin@redkite-animation.com

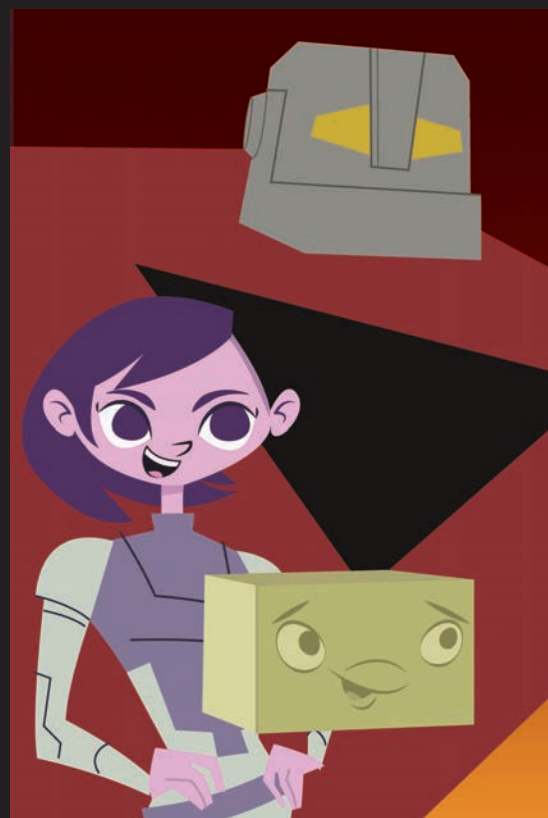
Produced by August Media Holdings, Red Kite Animation, Wendy Promotions Distributed by ZDF Enterprises, France Televisions
Distribution, August Rights Genre: Drama Format: 26 episodes x 24 mins, HD Language: English, German, French



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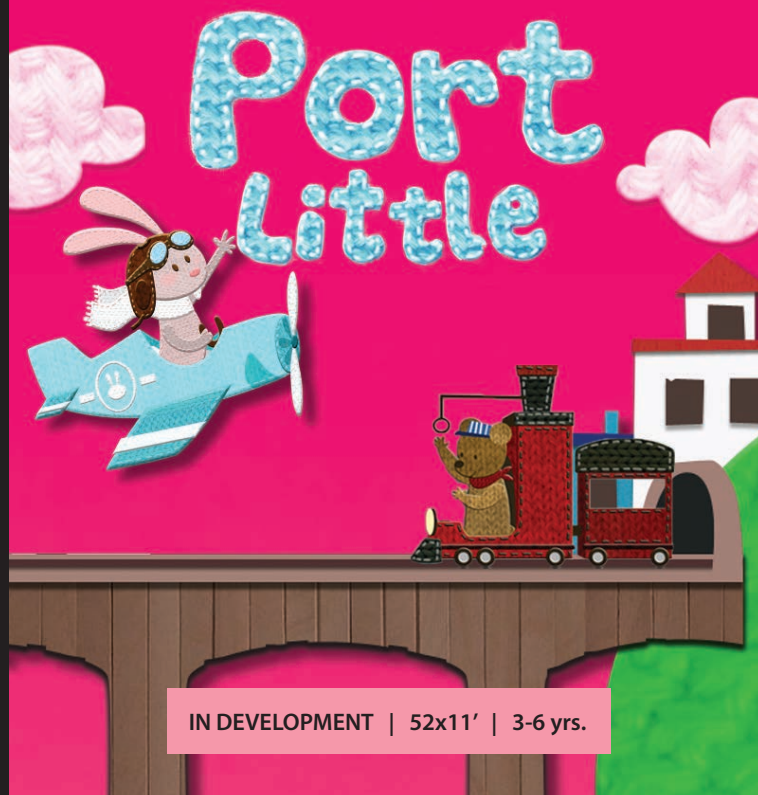


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Pipeline

An early peek at shows on the development track



kids
4 to 6

Dinopaws It only makes sense for the company that brought the world the incredibly successful *Walking with Dinosaurs* (Impossible Kids) to team up with Kindle and Guru to create a dino show that's perfect for older preschoolers. Kindle co-director Melanie Stokes says the inspiration for the aesthetic of *Dinopaws* came from Japanese vinyl toys, giving the unique CGI series a cartoony feel. Written by Alan Gilbey (*Frankenstein's Cat*, *Bounty Hamster* and *The Pinky and Perky Show*), the show sees three dinos on a mission to discover their primitive world, with a lot of clowning around and physical comedy along the way.

Co-producers: Impossible Kids (UK), Kindle Entertainment (UK) and Guru Studio (Canada)

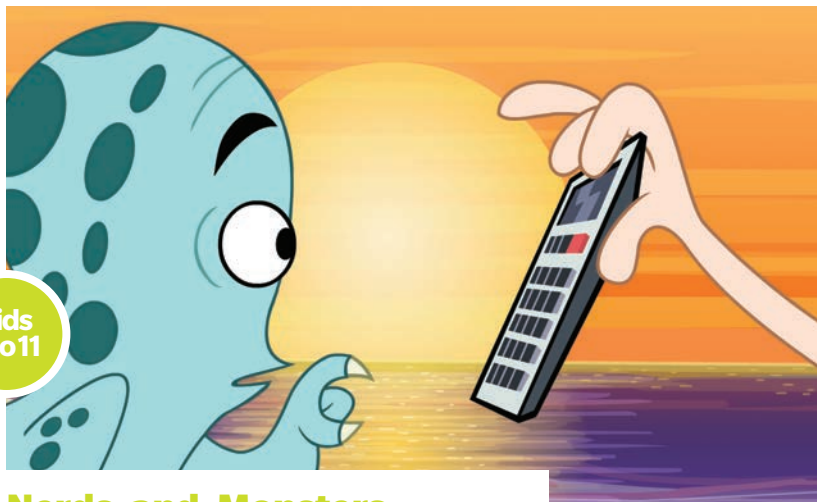
Style: CGI

Format: 52 x 11 minutes

Budget: US\$7.4 million

Delivery: 2014

Status: Broadcasters CBeebies (UK) and Treehouse (Canada) are on-board and the series is in preproduction/scripting



kids
6 to 11

Nerds and Monsters Vancouver's Slap Happy Cartoons has created a whole new studio to service *Nerds and Monsters*, a series initially pitched at Kidscreen Summit in 2010. The story revolves around four kids on their way to a trivia competition who get stranded on a monster-filled island by a freak storm. These nerd heroes who must use their smarts to outwit the inept, yet scary creatures. Notes Slap Happy principal Vito Viscomi, "The monsters are confused by the nerds with their braces and glasses. And, of course, the nerds are afraid of everything."

Producer: Slap Happy Cartoons, with 9 Story Entertainment distributing (Canada)

Style: 2D

Format: 40 x 11 minutes

Budget: US\$6 to US\$7 million

Delivery: Early 2014

Status: In production for YTV (Canada)

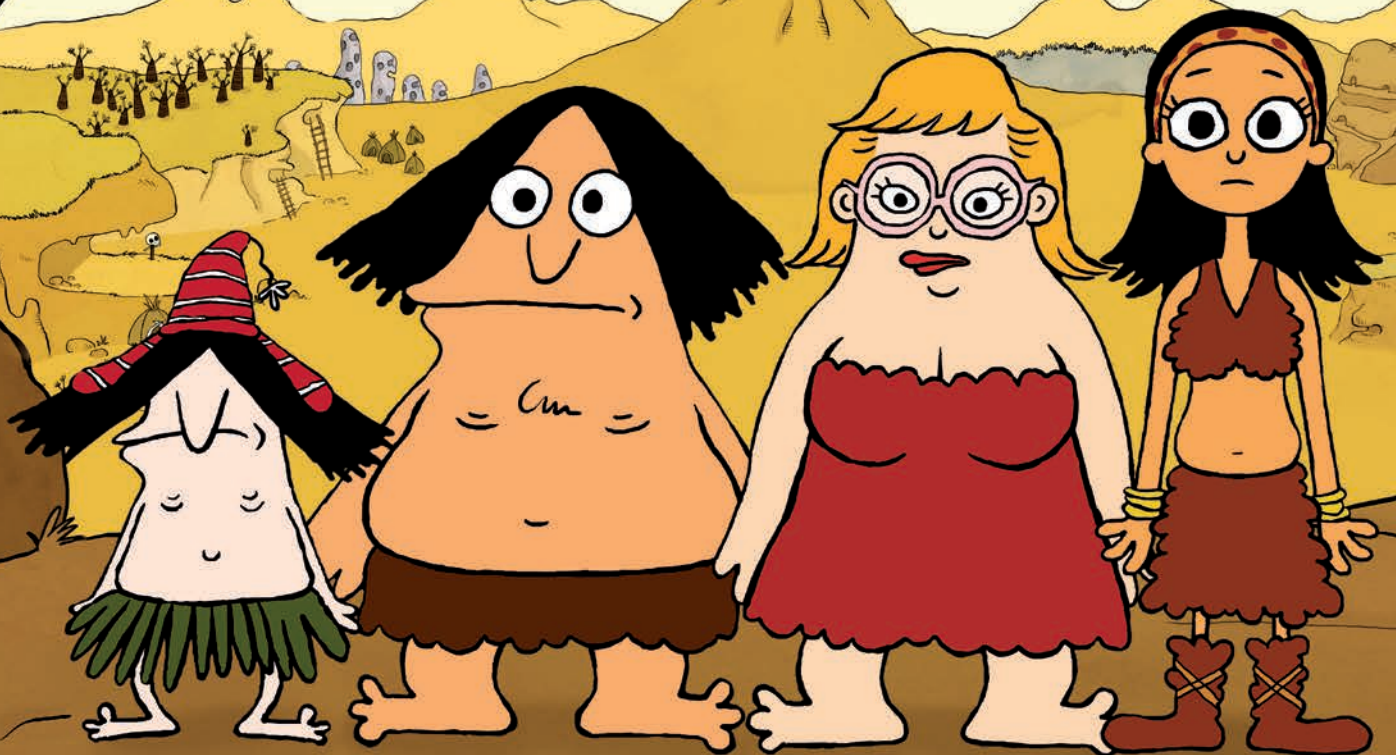
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kids
6 to 11

Viking Kong The first project from Brenda Wooding's newly minted Kid Glove Creative, *Viking Kong* brings together an über production team that includes Heather Kenyon (former head of development, original series at Cartoon Network), writer/artist David Freedman (*Groove High* for Disney, among others), the writing team of Keiron Self and Giles New (*The Canterville Ghost*, *Groove High*, *Shaun the Sheep*) and Belgium's Ministry of Animation. This animated action-comedy tells the tale of a band of inept invaders who strike out to conquer California only to land in China, where they are forced to rent a village retreat from local fishermen and scheme to build an empire of their own.

Producer: Kid Glove Creative (US)

Style: 2D

Format: 26 x 11 minutes

Budget: US\$7.5 to US\$8.5 million

Delivery: 2014

Status: In preproduction

9 Story gets Slap Happy

The Canadian indie takes on third-party distribution for the first time with new YTV animated comedy

From *Peep in the Big Wide World* to *Almost Naked Animals*, Toronto, Canada-based 9 Story Entertainment has made a name for itself as a leading animator, producer and self-distributor. Now it has plans to share all that expertise, and has started picking up and investing in third-party projects for distribution.

First up is Vancouver-based Slap Happy Cartoons' new animated comedy *Nerds and Monsters*, which already has a Canadian home on Corus Entertainment's YTV. But look for others—including a yet-to-be-announced preschool show—to follow.

"The challenge is getting people to understand that we are not a production company," explains 9 Story president and CEO Vince Commisso. "We are really an IP company that takes a property through its value chain. I think we have done a good job of that over the last couple of years," he contends. "The key is making sure it's not just a pipeline," he adds. "What comes through must be something that can be supported—there must be demand for it and it has to be the highest possible quality."

9 Story believes it has found the perfect first offering in *Nerds and Monsters*, an animated comedy targeting six to 11s that fits nicely into its catalogue—a criterion which EVP of business development Natalie Osborne says is critical when it comes to future third-party pick-ups.

"We want to make sure that the type of third-party acquisitions we bring to the table really complement what we are doing," explains Osborne. "We are not cannibalizing our own content. We want to treat our third-party product with kid gloves and make sure it has the exact same opportunity as our own content. We have to make sure everything is working together."

Commisso says the company's third-party distribution business will grow organically as projects appear and opportunities open up in the market. But he also says he'd like to broaden the definition of distribution, expanding beyond the television model into non-traditional areas.

"The typical model is for everyone to feel really good about selling 52 half hours everywhere," he observes. "Then they sit on the shelf, and that's it. You're on to the next project."

"We think there is an opportunity to use those two million frames that we have created—frames we happen to have lined up linearly from beginning to end—and repurpose them in a multi-linear fashion, or explore different digital exploitations to make new models of them." So stay tuned for more details on the next chapter from 9 Story. —Brendan Christie



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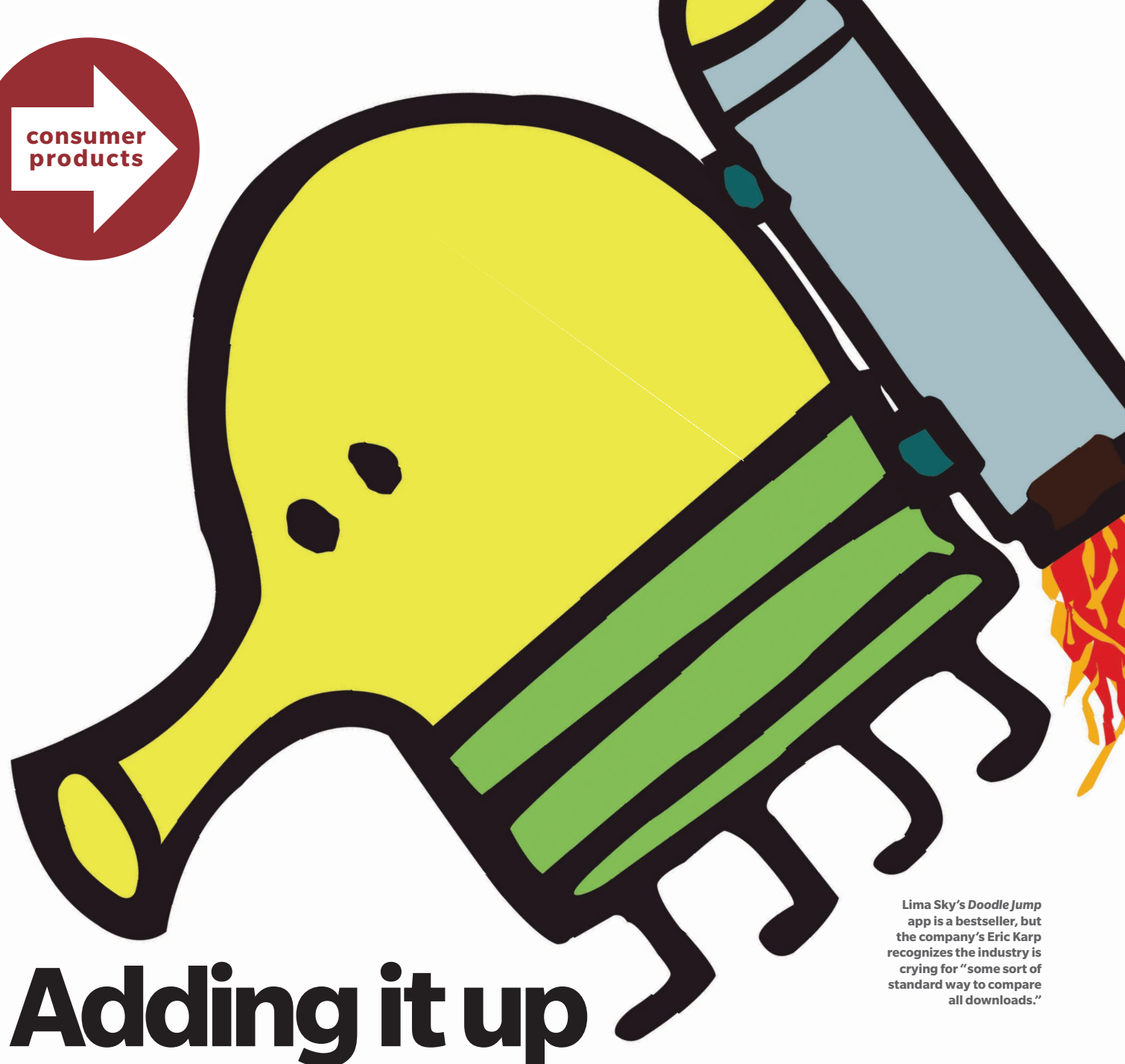
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Lima Sky's *Doodle Jump* app is a bestseller, but the company's Eric Karp recognizes the industry is crying for "some sort of standard way to compare all downloads."

Adding it up

As licensees and retailers continue to warm to CP programs built around apps, one thing's become apparent—there's a big gap between download stats and real-world product sales. Enter the push for reliable app analytics.

BY GARY RUSAK

Unlike TV-driven properties where retailers and licensing partners rely on established audience ratings numbers to determine the broad appeal of a property, often making their acquisition decisions based on those ratings, no similar standard exists in the burgeoning digital IP market. And it's becoming problematic for app licensors and their potential partners. How do you separate the next *Angry Birds* from the chaff? Well, that's the million-dollar question right now.

"There is an awareness gap," says Simon Kay, business development director of UK-based AT New Media and manager of the AT Brands division. The company's *Worms* IP was amongst the first digital gaming properties to have cross-over licensing success. "The industry has to be open to learning about user metrics so they can potentially make informed decisions."

Rob Corney, MD at UK-based Bulldog Licensing, likens the atmosphere in app licensing circles now to the early days of the internet. "Back then,

people would point at a massive number of page views for a site, but those are completely irrelevant statistics—you had to look at unique page views,” he says. “There is a real need out there today for consistent and verifiable statistics for apps.”

The problem might even be more complex than the decade-old page view conundrum. With hundreds of thousands of apps being developed each year on a number of platforms, including iOS, Android and Microsoft phones, it’s becoming increasingly difficult to get a handle on a valid measurement mechanism.

“It’s a bit of a moving target,” says Eric Karp, chief licensing officer for Lima Sky, creator of the bestselling *Doodle Jump* app. “There is a cry for some sort of standard way to compare all downloads. Gross downloads is the easiest measure, but then the challenge becomes determining what’s considered a download and what isn’t.”

The first and most obvious distinction in the app world, contends Karp, is differentiating free downloads from paid ones. Kay agrees, adding that comparing paid to unpaid download numbers in the first place is a frivolous exercise. “If someone pays for a product, they tend to have much more of a connection to it,” he says. “If it’s free, consumers tend to move very quickly from one experience to another one.”

With multiple platforms and different ways of tallying download totals, the numbers race has escalated, only serving to further confuse potential licensing and retail partners as they look to enter the nascent apps licensing space.

“We have focused on talking about paid downloads

because they’re a good indication of how people are engaging with the game,” says Karp. “However, if other folks are using math that gives them numbers up in the stratosphere, as a company you almost feel an obligation to present those types of numbers out of pure self-preservation. You don’t want your numbers to look smaller because someone else is using a different calculation.”

Corney says as his company has started evaluating the potential of digital properties to represent, he has grown wary of astronomical download numbers. “People are throwing out eye-wateringly high numbers,” he says. “There is no audit in this area, so we just are really careful to work with reputable companies.”

Know your MAU

Putting aside the large numbers being bandied about for now, Kay believes there are two key statistics of which everyone interested in working with app-driven properties should be aware—Monthly Active Users (MAU) and Daily Active Users (DAU).

“When I mention those terms, a lot of licensing people still look at me and wonder what I’m talking about,” he says. “But those are two very key numbers. They are key indications of the potential opportunity, because everyone is after properties with a high engagement and a captive audience.”

On the flip side, a common mistake is to over-value the reach of a particular app without paying enough attention to the engagement level—it is the biggest factor in creating a scalable and lucrative licensing program.

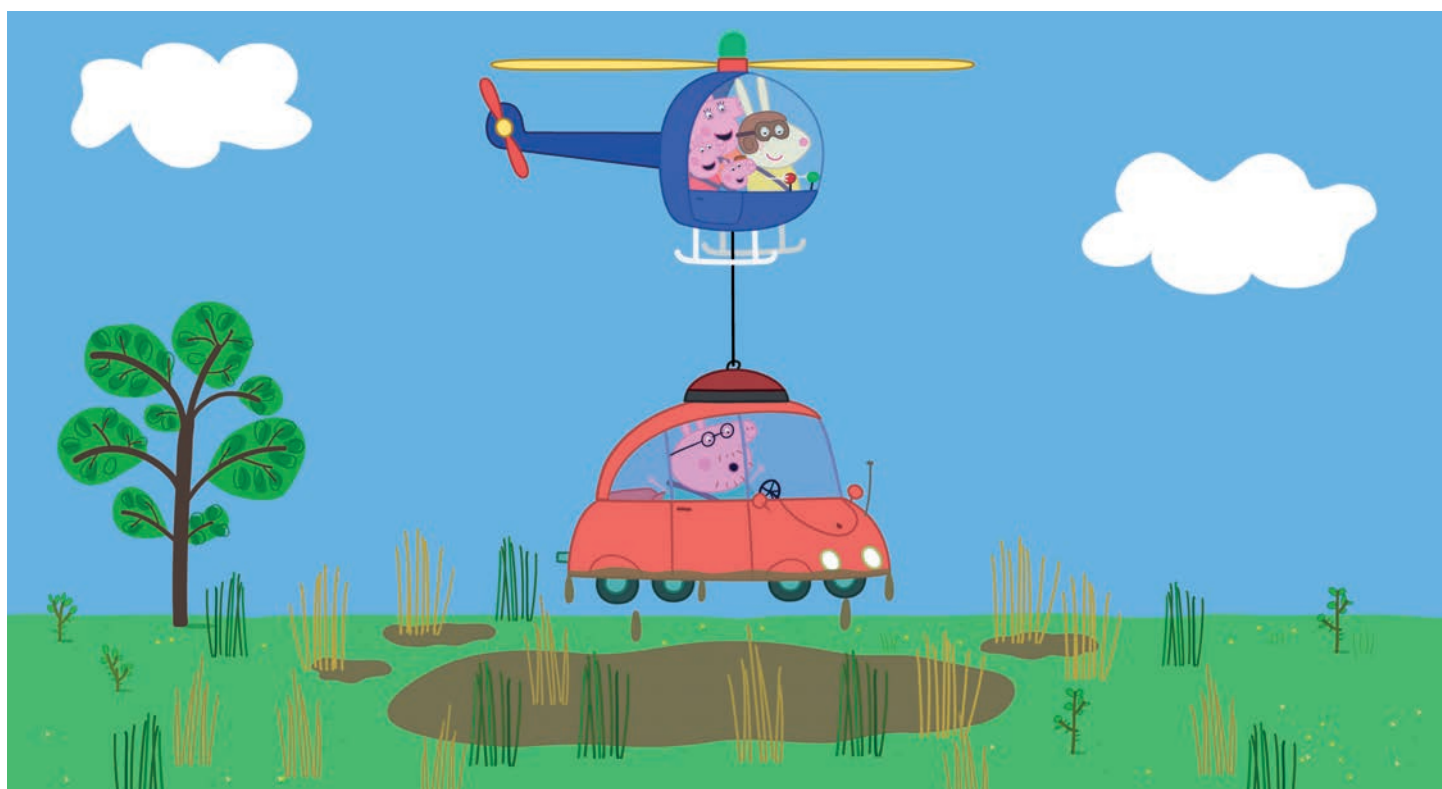
User engagement should be top-of-mind when evaluating bestselling apps like *Plants vs. Zombies*—if they play regularly, kids are more likely to have an affinity for the property



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Corney cites MAU as a crucial stat for evaluating audience engagement, and subsequently a property's potential as a licensing endeavor. "Monthly Active Users is really the core currency right now," he says. "People are obsessive about reach, but actually, repeat use is what is extremely important. You can look at stats that say something has been downloaded 100 million times, but that doesn't mean people are engaging with it all the time."

As an analogy, Corney points to TV series in the UK such as *Eastenders* and *Coronation Street* that are consistently ratings winners, but have not shown comparable traction in terms of licensing. "Just because people know what it is or have seen it, doesn't make it licensable," he says.

Kay says that in order to build a retail program, engagement levels have to be consistently high.

"Even if you shipped to 50 million users, if your daily or monthly active users aren't there, you really don't have much," he says.

Judging a lifecycle

Another often overlooked way to get a read on an app's CP potential is to view its surrounding activity through the lens of specific times and dates. "Retailers have to understand the lifecycle of an app or game in order to best place it in front of consumers," says Kay.

He points to GameStop's Christmas 2012 experimental launch of 80 pop-up stores, which focused on selling gaming and app-related merchandise, as a good example of a retailer coming to terms with the specific rhythms of app and digital game properties.

Kay contends that these types of IP are fundamentally different from a blockbuster movie or TV property because their updates and sequels are often released a few times a year, rather than once or twice.

"Look at something like *Call of Duty* or *Minecraft* and you can see that their sales curves rise and fall throughout the year," he says. And retailers have to be able to anticipate those spikes to put themselves in a better position to capitalize on them. "They are finally getting there."

Additionally, a temporal look at download numbers reveals a major limitation of the analytics offered through Apple's iTunes Connect.

"There are numbers out there that really are just a snapshot of a specific place in time," says Corney. "A lot of brands are saying that they have 20 billion downloads, but they won't tell you that they reached that number three years ago and have only sold three since."

Kay says that relying on iTunes Connect to provide well-rounded and contextualized information is not sufficient. "I don't believe [Apple is] really very open with its stats," he says. "Plus, there are all those other platforms to consider."

App Annie

Of the many app analytics sites that have sprung up in the past 24 months, Beijing, China-based App Annie seems to have become the go-to for those looking to get a quick handle on the app world. The website offers a free



AT New Media helped bring the Worms gaming IP into retail and believes there are currently two key stats that matter—Monthly Active Users and Daily Active Users

service and a number of premium services to a growing client list that includes app developers, manufacturers, investment banks and retailers.

"Our free service offers a basic dashboard, where we can summarize all the daily info that you could get from iTunes Connect," says Nicolas Beraudo, EVP of worldwide sales and GM for North America at App Annie. "We put it all on a nice interface and it shows you your sales or downloads and territories."


Additionally, the basic App Annie site allows users to save an app's historical data, a service that iTunes Connect does not offer.

The subscription service, meanwhile, offers deeper insight and can be employed as a source of market intelligence in much the same way that NPD Research is used to measure retail performance.

"We leverage the data we get from about 140,000 apps to date and use that data to create estimates for the market," says Beraudo. "The paid service can tell you, for instance, that X app is generating millions of downloads in Japan on such and such platform."

The subscription service can cost anywhere between US\$12,000 and US\$200,000 a year, depending on the depth of the information requested. It currently attracts 11 of the top 15 app developers in the world, while the free service is utilized by about 80% of the globe's top 100 app development companies.

"It gives you a good estimate of downloads and revenues of a specific product," Beraudo says. "So a company can look at the numbers and say, for example, 'Do we need to be in Japan?' Publishers can use the information to drive their overall roadmap and development strategy."

Increasingly, Beraudo is also finding that the licensing success of *Angry Birds* has driven new clients to the site in the hopes of being able to better understand which apps have the necessary user-base to support revenue-generating merchandising programs. "I would say the market is getting smarter," he says. "People are getting more familiar as the industry matures—you start to see the need to know a bit more about the market than the next guy." 

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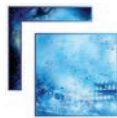
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Disney Junior grows up at US retail

Disney looks to New York Toy Fair to launch its new umbrella brand

A year into its US channel launch, global brand Disney Junior is looking to make a splash at New York Toy Fair this month with a slew of new licensing extensions aimed at making the network a major preschool player in the boys and girls retail aisles.

"The shows are resonating with kids and their moms," says JD Edwards, SVP of media networks and games for Disney Consumer Products. "This is the most robust toy line that we have had."

Since its US launch, 24-hour preschool-focused network Disney Junior has debuted several successful original series, such as *Doc McStuffins*, *Jake and the Never Land Pirates* and *Sofia the First*.

While series have traditionally taken longer to germinate with their target audiences before entering the highly competitive world of consumer products, Lisa Avent, VP of franchise, media networks and games at DCP, says the window between a series hitting the air and products landing on shelves is getting shorter. "We have shortened our launch strategy to align with the success of the show," she says.

Edwards, for his part, believes preschoolers' unprecedented access to programming when they want it through various platforms like mobile and VOD has served to tighten traditional timelines. "It's getting out there quicker," he says. "We just don't have to wait as long. It's great for us." A gap that used to average 24 months between series and product launch is now less than a year.

To wit, the new Disney Junior properties will have more than 180 different products extensions available at US retailers throughout 2013.

This year also signals a new approach for Disney in the preschool area, says Avent. "We have had preschool series that are gender-neutral," she says. "Now we have specific boys and girls [series], and that has allowed us to have really direct product development around specific genders."

One gender-specific show in line for the full CP treatment is *Doc McStuffins*. The series features six-year-old Doc, who heals sick toys with help from her stuffed animal friends. It bowed on Disney Junior US last March, and at Toy Fair, Disney will unveil a number of *McStuffins* products including the Doc McStuffins Checkup Center. This large play center (US\$79.99) was developed with licensee Just Play and will be shipped to all tiers of retail in August and September.

"We worked closely with Disney to recreate Doc's check-up table," says Charlie Emby, co-president of Just Play. "Most role-play sets are based on traditional play patterns, but our Doc McStuffins Checkup Center is specific to Doc and the way she nurtures and heals her toys."

Another series transitioning to the toy aisle this year is princess-themed *Sofia the First*. "It's going to be a broad assortment," says Edwards, explaining that developing a new line always includes plenty of give-and-take with licensees.

"For something like Sofia, there is obviously going to be dolls and playsets," he says. "But there are other items that come up after we sit with our partners and get a real understanding of how to bring the show to life."

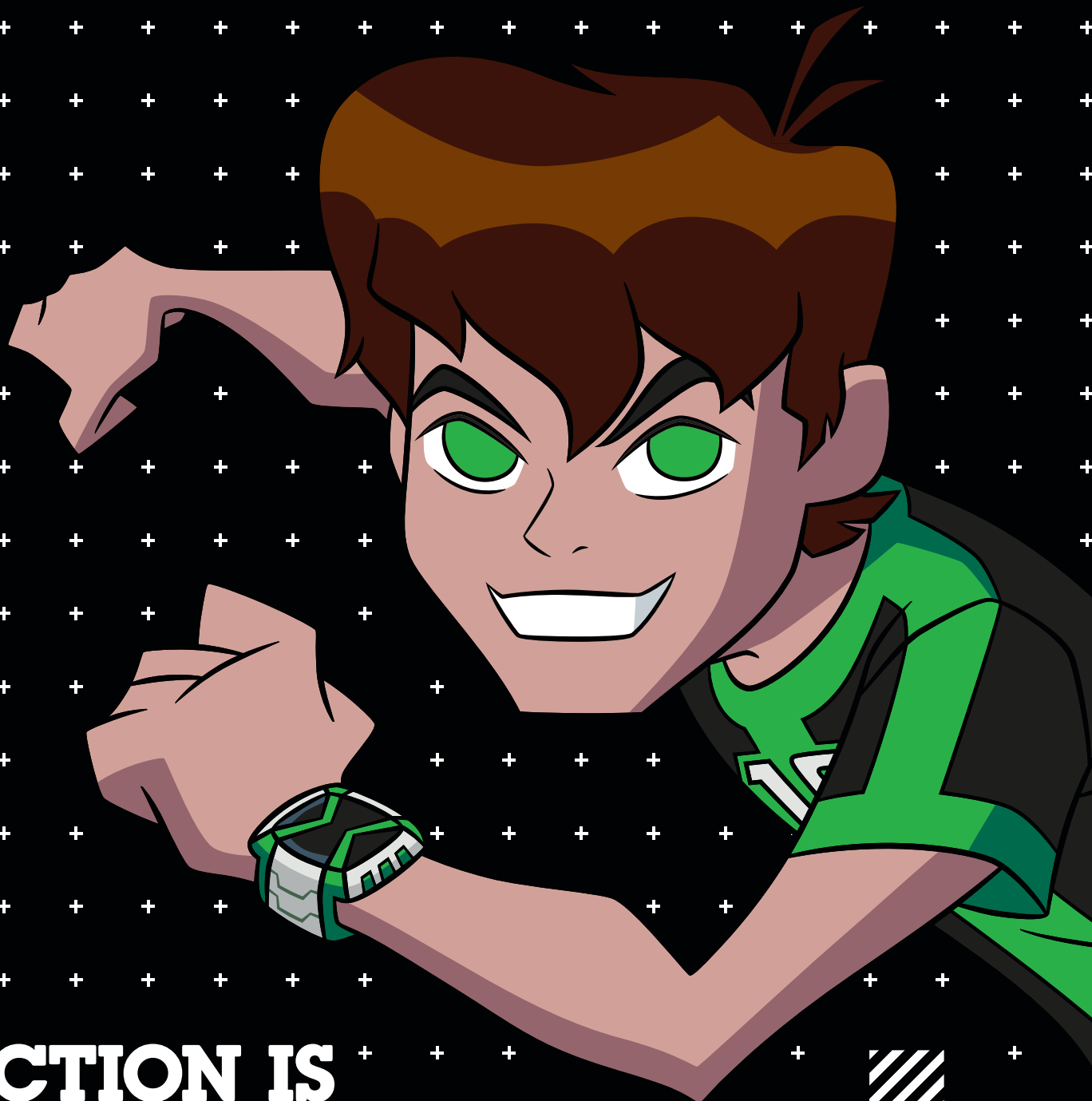
The initial Sofia products are due to hit all tiers of US retail in June and will include the Sofia the First Talking Amulet (US\$14.99) from Jakks Pacific, an interactive necklace that mirrors the one the titular character wears in the series (it also comes with 12 collectible cards). There's also the Sofia the First Magical Talking Castle (US\$59.99) from Mattel, a large-format dollhouse complete with character voices.

Avent says this year also marks the first time Disney will be able to coordinate its preschool offerings at major retailers like Toys 'R' Us under the Disney Junior brand to offer consumers a one-stop shopping option for preschool boys and girls.

"We now have a Disney Junior statement at retail," she says. "It will all be housed in one area and it is a first for us to be able to offer an entire preschool umbrella." —Gary Rusak

The Doc McStuffins Checkup Center is one of the IP's new feature items

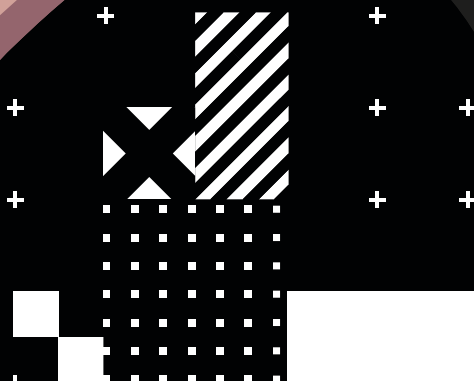




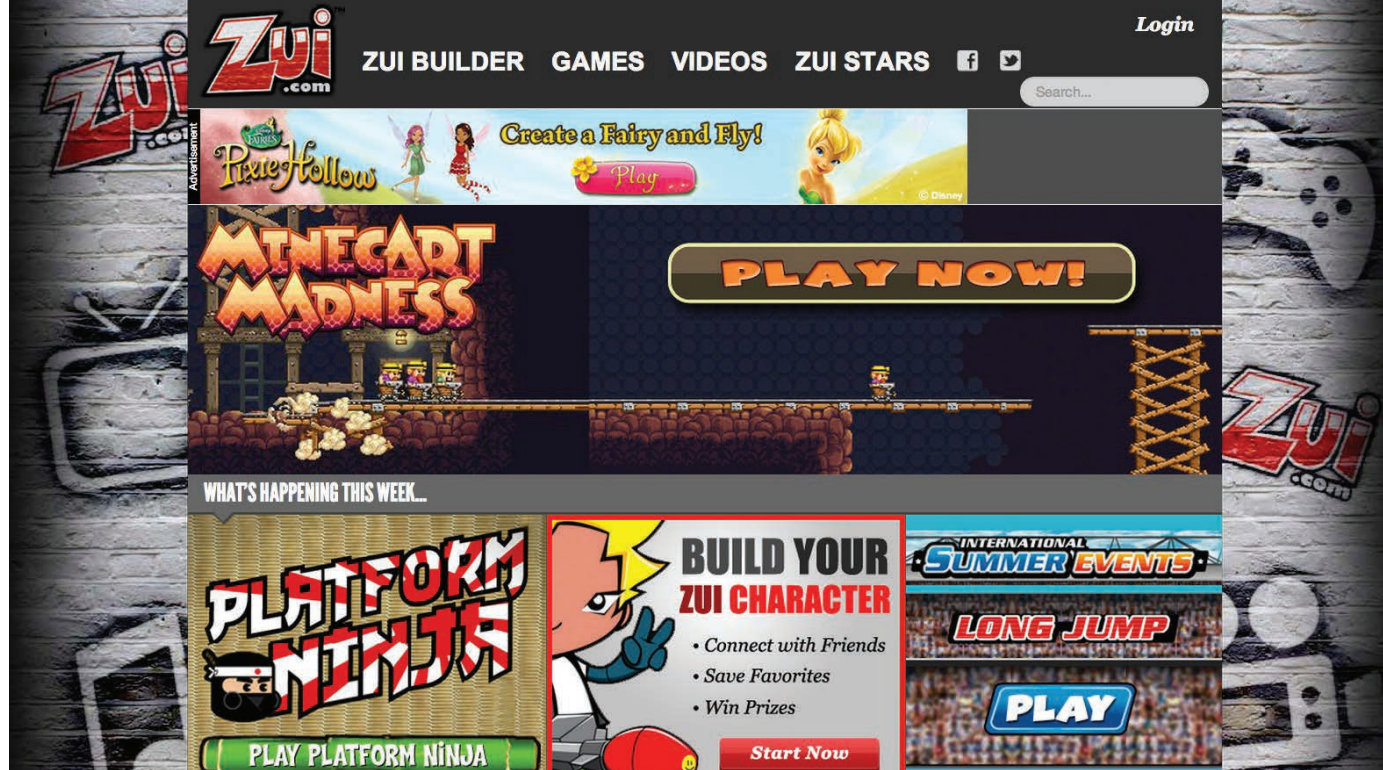
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Internet ambitions

Saban Brands puts its consumer products marketing know-how to work on Zui.com

When Saban Brands added kid-friendly internet platform Zui.com to its ever-growing portfolio last September, the company's goal was nothing short of establishing a new global kids internet powerhouse.

"Plan A was that we were going to build something like it," says Elie Dekel, president of Saban Brands. "But why build it when these guys have been doing it for years? It's a proven platform that is on the forefront of defining what it means to have safe kids content."

Zui.com was established five years ago as a downloadable software format, offering a variety of filtering mechanisms that would help kids find quality, age-appropriate content on the internet.

"There was a lot of filtering software around, but really nothing that pointed kids to the good stuff," says Ryan Bettencourt, president of Zui.com. "So we curated the content."

While the market forces surrounding downloadable software dictated that Zui change its approach and launch web portal Zui.com, the proprietary system of vetting content—a mix between computer algorithms and a human board of review—served as the backbone of the web hub.

"The real differentiation for Zui is that it captures the zeitgeist for the coolest stuff online," says Bettencourt.

The site, which attracts approximately 60,000 daily visitors, features a library of videos and online games, as well as social networking capability with tight controls on interactions. The idea has also been spun off into an aged-down site KidZui.com. With more than 40 million page views a month across the two sites, and between 1.2 and 2.3 million unique visitors a month, the sites have attracted advertisers to support their shared business model.

A flurry of awards, including citations from the CNET, National Parenting Publications Awards and The Parenting Publications Awards, have also followed.

That's what caught the attention of Saban Brands, which was looking for a digital home and showcase for its growing stable of IPs led by Power Rangers and Paul Frank.

"We looked at it as a strategic platform," says Dekel. "When you combine it with what we are doing at Saban, you see that we are virtuous to each other. We are providing horsepower for Zui to expand, and it is providing us with horsepower because we are able to bring a best-in-class internet experience to our many business initiatives."

The upshot will be an influx of properties to Zui.com, steered by Saban Brands. It's started with the marriage of Zui.com's proprietary content filter to MyVortexx.com, the online portal of Saban's Saturday morning broadcast destination Vortexx on The CW in the US.

"We were able to take their architecture and content," says Dekel. "We see this as an opportunity for it to become a global platform."

While hinting that a deal is in the works that will bring the Zui approach to a "major territory with a major broadcaster" in early 2013, Dekel adds the site will be a "core part of how we grow our business."

Saban could use the site to introduce new properties to consumers in the future, as well as a catalyst to ink partnership with third-party IPs, which will house content on the site. "We see the platform as part of a larger ecosystem," says Dekel. "It's a tremendous engagement tool."

The first priority for this year, says Dekel, is generating more traffic and increasing the site's global profile.

—Gary Rusak



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**PBS Kids
Sprout turns
to Big Tent to
germinate its
first brand-
wide licensing
program**



Chica from *The Chica Show* is one of Sprout's breakout CP stars

Cropping up

The theme of celebrating preschoolers' every day moments has helped establish multimedia broadcaster PBS Kids Sprout as a unique brand in the marketplace.

After seven years on-air, the first 24-hour preschool channel in the US is now available in more than 50 million homes across the country. The recently launched Sprout-branded block on broadcast net NBC (currently seen in more than 110 million US homes) has only enhanced the broadcaster's profile. With all of these eyeballs upon it, the brand is making the move to enter the licensing arena in full force.

"We are hearing the demand," says Sandy Wax, president and GM for PBS Kids Sprout. "You can really stumble very easily out of the gate if you rush out and do something without understanding your consumer's needs. We don't want to shove characters on a bunch of t-shirts and coffee mugs. It's been a slow build."

Jim Multari, VP of marketing and research for Sprout, adds that it was audience reaction to channel original *The Chica Show* that initially sparked the move into consumer products. "We decided to satisfy that demand by issuing a limited run of Chica plush," he says, describing the first deal signed with Fiesta Toys in Vernon, California last June. "It did well, so we spent 2012 thinking about the licensing business as a whole."

The first part of the strategy included the soft launch of Shop Sprout last month. The online retail portal currently features a small sampling of products that will grow as the brand adds licensees. Additionally, Sprout is working with on-demand expert CafePress to further bolster its lineup of products, drawing on Sprout properties such as *The Good Night Show* and *Chica*.

"It helps us to have a one-stop shop online for all of the products," says Multari. "And it gives our licensees added distribution for their products, as well."

Realizing the limitations of its own resources, however, Sprout has tapped New York's Big Tent Entertainment as its licensing agent to better realize the brand's potential. "[Big Tent] has had a great deal of success with Discovery Kids, and we think that kind of approach can help us build, too," says Wax.

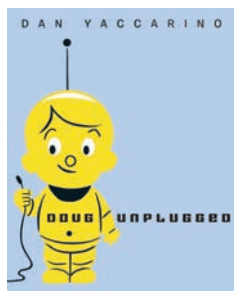
Rich Collins, Big Tent CEO, says that Sprout's unique approach to programming makes it a natural fit for a long and sustainable licensing program. "It's groundbreaking," he says. "It's that unique brand image that we are looking for when we look for partners; that is what excites licensees."

Collins feels that the brand already has a clear identity—a must to build a licensing program.

"Life happens between big events," he says. "If you look at what that means in terms of products that are associated with bedtime or bathtime or meals, you start to see the potential." Collins says Big Tent will be taking a slow and careful approach with the Sprout program. A two- to three-year rollout will likely lean towards first landing products at specialty retailers and building out from there.

"It's a brand, it's not about just one show or one character," he says. "The Sprout name already means a lot to moms and dads, so that's a good place to start."

—Gary Rusak



BookBet Doug Unplugged

The adventures of a robot looking for the real world take center stage in *Doug Unplugged*, a new book from Random House's Knopf Books for Young Readers. The 40-page hardcover title will retail for US\$16.99 and was written by Dan Yaccarino, creator of TV series *Oswald* and *Willa's Wild Life*. Aimed at a five- to nine-year old audience, the story follows its titular character as he unplugs from the information superhighway and (gasp!) goes outside. The comedic tale of robot rebellion and the value of real experience hits shelves this month. —Gary Rusak

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Poeticgem augments the humble t-shirt

Who Based in Watford, England, Poeticgem started out producing private-label apparel for major retailers, but it didn't wait too long to start up a licensing division. "[About three years ago] we figured we should capitalize on the strength that we had in the UK market," says Elliott Matthews, executive director for the company.

While it initially tested the licensing arena with a bevy of sports properties, including English soccer and rugby brands, Poeticgem eventually entered the kids space with product sporting WWE and Marvel's Super Hero Squad licenses.

What With a keen eye for emerging IP, Poeticgem started to look at the digital space as a viable place to find new and interesting concepts. "We found that it was becoming less and less about what kids were watching on TV and more about what they were downloading," says Matthews. With that in mind, the company soon picked up apparel rights for some of the bigger apps in the marketplace, including *Fruit Ninja*, *Cut the Rope* and *Annoying Orange*. However,

Poeticgem wasn't just going to make boring old t-shirts for these high-tech digital licenses.

Latest innovation In August 2012, Poeticgem released its first Augmented Reality Fruit Ninja T-shirt. "You can just point your handheld device at it and the graphic comes alive on your phone," says Matthews. "The reaction has been very good from retailers." The technology utilizes the Zappar Augmented Reality platform, so users can download the Zappar app to unleash the technology on their phones.

"Once the image is on your phone, you can upload it to Twitter or Facebook, and the whole thing becomes much more interactive," says Matthews.

Generally, applying an Augmented Reality feature to a t-shirt adds roughly US\$1 per unit to production costs. The initial line of Augmented apparel has performed well, and Poeticgem has just picked up the license from Fox to produce similar apparel under the *Family Guy* brand. "It takes some time for people to get it," says Matthews. "But now they know it's out there."



What's next Matthews says the next order of business for the company will be to grow its retail distribution base. "We are looking to expand throughout Europe in the coming years," he says. Additionally, the company has plans to broaden its offerings into women's wear in the future.

Contact Elliott Matthews (elliott@poeticgem.com), executive director of Poeticgem, 44-192-324-9497. —Gary Rusak



UK-based online retailer sets up unique shopping club exclusively for licensed goods

First to market

Led by Gilt Groupe, which boasts an estimated six million members, internet shopping clubs now generate billions of dollars in sales each year. New entrant Shopping4Fans is hoping to make an impact on the market as the first club of its kind, one that is exclusively dedicated to selling licensed merchandise.

"It's a business model that is working well for the fashion industry, and it seems like it would work really well for the licensing industry, too," says Patrick Ashworth, CEO of the UK-based company. "There is a massive hole in the market."

The opportunity, he believes, is to offer short-term shopping events focused on selling over-stock merchandise to its members. "There is sometimes a miscalculation with supply and demand," he explains. "We will be offering up to 80% discounts on these items, in effect becoming the end of the retail cycle."

Ashworth says brands are looking for an outlet where they can exercise control of the over-stock items, and that by setting up an exclusive club/members-only shopping environment, Shopping4Fans can target loyal brand-dedicated consumers for this discounted merchandise.

"It's a big problem for brands," he says. "There are no alternatives and they can't control what channel the extra stock goes to. With us, they have control—they can set up events as often as they want."

The initial of the club on January 3 featured official merchandise from the London 2012 Olympics, offering discounts of 80% on products, including backpacks, wallets and stationery.

Ashworth says that the company has already been in contact with dozens of IP owners, manufacturers and licensees, and is quite interested in building a kids and teens presence on the site. "Kids merchandise and character merchandise is definitely where we are going," he says.

The site is free to join and will offer members exclusive short-term sales. The sales events won't be publicized to non-members online to avoid internet aggregators from picking up the sales and cheapening the exclusivity. "Our priority is to protect the brands and offer them a closed community," says Ashworth.

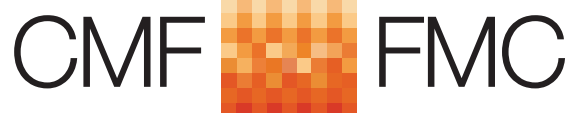
The site is accessible globally and is hoping to attract more than a million users from around the world in the next nine to 12 months. —Gary Rusak



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What do kids find funny?

It's an age-old question, but new research from Cartoon Network gets closer to finding the answer

BY JEFF GRANT

I remember the first joke my kids told me when they were about five or six years old. “What do you get when you combine a rooster, a poodle and a cockatoo?” they asked, giggling all over themselves. I gave the standard Dad response, “Well, I don’t know. What do you get when you combine a rooster, a poodle and a cockatoo?” I was sure the punch line was going to be a groaner, but I could tell my kids thought it was the funniest thing in the world—and ultimately, that’s all that mattered.

At Cartoon Network, humor is a cornerstone of our business. The network launched 20 years ago with animated comedy staples *Looney Tunes*, *Scooby-Doo*, *Yogi Bear* and *Tom and Jerry*. Since then, we’ve evolved our brand of “funny” into hit series like *Adventure Time*, *Regular Show* and *The Amazing World of Gumball*. This evolution has succeeded because we’ve been able to engender humor targeted squarely to that core audience. And to help the network keep on target, the research department consistently explores what appeals to kids, as we did recently in a study of what kids find funny on TV.

We began our exploration through a series of qualitative focus groups conducted with kids. We split the groups into four demographics representing Cartoon Network’s key audiences of boys eight to nine, 10 to 11 and 12 to 14, as well as girls eight to nine. We asked each kid who participated to bring an example of a TV clip that represented something funny that they had watched in the past week or two. Additionally, we presented clips we had chosen, making sure they covered content from not only Cartoon Network, but our

competitors, too. The kids were asked to share whether or not they found the clips funny and why, with further discussion about what made each clip funnier or less funny based on the inclusion of elements like cartoonish slapstick, pratfalls, audio and visual humor, cultural references, scale, etc.

Based on this feedback and further background research, we were able to identify seven genres of humor, as well as various devices used to facilitate the funny moments:

- **Slapstick or “Action” Humor**—as with *The Three Stooges*, this genre involves noticeable “pain” being inflicted on a person or character to comical effect.
- **“Potty” Humor**—a loud exhibition of bodily functions for the sake of a laugh (think the baked beans scene from *Blazing Saddles*).
- **Parody**—*MAD Magazine* has made its name on sending up current TV shows and movies; “spoofing” also highlights the eponymous TV series *MAD* on Cartoon Network.
- **Verbal Humor**—using words and their manipulation (separate from things like sounds or sight gags) to evoke laughter.
- **Visual Humor**—leveraging visual cues, like scale, sight gags or production quality.
- **Throwaway Humor**—relying on quick, almost random placements of comedy that typically are unrelated to the linear storyline (think of the blackouts in *Family Guy*).
- **Repetitive Gags**—elements that viewers expect to consistently recur to humorous effect.

For each genre of humor, a variety of devices are used in TV shows to help bring about funny moments. While viewing the sample clips, kids often noted that they would be even funnier if bigger sounds or sound effects were employed to contribute to the overall humor.

Conversely, while production quality was identified and frequently noted, kids did not seem all that influenced by it. It's not that they object to the use of effects with high production values, but kids just don't think they add to the humor.

Another device kids relate to is use of scale. Scale comes into play when the content highlights or contrasts characters of absurd or disproportionate size. In one case, the large relative size of a character made it acceptable for kids to see comic violence used on that character. At the same time, a tiny character could be funny if it evoked fear from regular-sized characters, essentially playing against viewer expectations.

The kids we surveyed believed cultural references were best used when the context is understandable to the audience, but it's not essential. Even if they understand only some of the references, kids can still appreciate parody.

Finally, kids recognized that many humorous programs include funny songs. They claimed that this device is particularly effective if the song explains the plotline or moves the story along.

After completing the qualitative study, we quickly followed it up with quantitative research that would help us cement the concepts that had been identified and discussed. We surveyed more than 2,200 US kids ages six to 14, evenly distributing the sample across boys and girls, as well as across six to eight, nine to 11 and 12 to 14 demos. The sample was also racially and ethnically representative of the US population.

To evaluate our comedic elements, we chose 36 video clips from a variety of shows airing on top kids networks. Each of the video clips represented one of the nine humor themes that we extracted from the focus groups—Quick Cuts, Silly Violence, Slapstick, Repetitive Gags, Predictability, Bodily Functions, Pop Culture, Being Popular and use of Pop Music. Ultimately, the kids rated the clips on a five-point scale, framed by three key questions. The top-box responses thus determined our key action standards: the clip was “extremely funny,” kids “liked the clip a lot,” and kids “definitely would watch this clip again.” From these parameters we were able to determine each theme's importance to humor, both in general and relative to age and gender.

Based on resulting top-box scores, the nine themes fell into three different tiers consistently across our three action standards:

- The highest tier included the Predictability, Silly Violence, Slapstick and Repetitive Gags themes that kids found most appealing.
- The middle tier included Bodily Functions and Quick Cuts.
- The bottom tier included Pop Music, Being Popular and Popular Culture.

Combining feedback on the clips by age, our team also detected developmental categorizations of humor. For younger kids ages six to nine, and skewing a bit younger for girls, they preferred humor elements focused on self-control—specifically, kids' attempts to develop a mastery of their own bodies. As a result, Potty Humor (i.e. farting, nose-picking) was the sweet spot for them. This younger demo also seemed to prefer humor centered on themes of defying norms, including kids doing things that they're really not supposed to do. Watching someone perform a taboo act heightened the humor's emotional resonance, making it all the more appealing to young viewers.

For kids nine to 11, preferred humor revolved around personal efficacy. Around this age, kids concentrate on trying to learn what adults expect of them regarding rules and boundaries. Accordingly, humor appeals to them if it includes topics like managing their parents, dealing with brothers/sisters and relating to friends in one-on-one situations. Also worth noting, aggression starts to play a role in humor for this age group. Boys exhibit a preference for

“Kids relate to use of scale...a tiny character could be funny if it evoked fear from regular-sized characters, essentially playing against viewer expectations.”

aggressive physical humor. Girls, however, show a preference for verbally aggressive humor, including “Mean Girls”-style interaction that employs harsh nicknames and inside jokes. Not surprisingly, many of these themes can be found across a wide variety of programming options targeting kids.

Finally, pre-adolescents 11 to 14 enjoyed peer-oriented humor that involves references to fitting in, either within groups of friends or, more broadly, into the world at large. Broader issues of popularity and exclusion begin to play a big role in their lives, so humor that focuses on their place among peer groups is seen as a way to relate during a time of emotional flux. As might be expected, the larger appeal of this brand of humor skews toward 12- to 14-year-old girls, and is more often presented in live-action comedy programming targeted to kids. These shows tend to address this developmental niche based on the fact that their main characters typically deal with similar, relatable real-life issues.

So, we're still left with one question: What do you get when you combine a rooster, a poodle and a cockatoo? On the verge of laughter, my kids replied “a cockapoodletoo!” Maybe it wasn't as hilarious to me, but after undertaking this study, I can easily see why they laughed. **k**

Jeff Grant is SVP of research for Turner Broadcasting's Animation, Young Adults and Kids Media (AYAKM) division and is responsible for all aspects of research for Cartoon Network, Adult Swim and AYAKM digital extensions and consumer products, including organizing, analyzing and reporting on audience ratings.

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Meet The Mom Next Door

New research underscores the power of face-to-face communication with moms

BY LAURA TOMASETTI

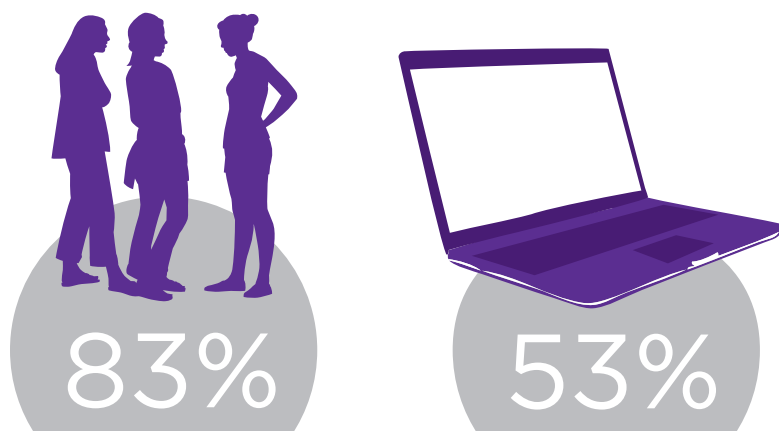
Much has been written about the power of word-of-mom marketing. In recent years, in part fueled by the explosion of social media, brands have increasingly shifted dollars from traditional marketing, such as advertising, to vehicles that enable brands to interact more directly with moms. The goal, of course, is to get moms to use and recommend your brand to other moms, which has largely fuelled brands' interest in bloggers. But what about the millions of other US moms who make product recommendations each week without a blog? And who's more influential—the Facebook mom or the mom chatting up other moms when they drop their kids off at school?

360 Public Relations joined with Lindberg International Research and Mom-It Forward to gain insight into “the mom next door” and examine why and how she makes recommendations. While social media is here to stay, the research findings underscore the power of face-to-face conversations, and can help brands better understand and plan their approach to the mom next door.

We talked to more than 1,000 US moms with children ages zero to 12 between August and October 2012 via quantitative web-based interviews with 964 moms, a series of in-home focus groups with 95 moms, and an online event with 27 social media moms. Nearly three-quarters of moms said they recommend brands at least monthly, with half doing so daily or weekly. When it comes to toys and entertainment products for children, there's a very high degree of “mom-it-forward” influence, with approximately two-thirds of moms saying they're likely to turn to other moms for recommendations.

The Power of In-Person

More moms make recommendations in-person than online.



360pr.com/momnextdoor

The Mom Next Door, published by The 360PR Mom Squad® and Mom It Forward®, October 2012.

The power of in-person

In today's online world, it surprised us to find that more moms (83%) rated in-person contact higher than social media (53%) as their preferred way to make recommendations about brands. On the receiving end, in-person recommendations also rated higher, with 59% of moms giving in-person recommendations the highest possible rating for trustworthiness, while just 14% of moms rated social media recommendations as “most trustworthy.” That's a bit of a wake-up call for brands. They need to find more ways to connect with moms in person.

The women surveyed told us what they really value is discussions with other moms who know them personally—that mom next door who's been to her house, knows the ages of her kids and the details of her life, whose house she's visited and whom she admires. “I know she'll give it to me straight,” a Chicago mom explained. “I will use products that I see her use in her own house.”

In each of the six in-home focus groups we conducted, it became apparent how readily moms latched on to the moms making recommendations in the room, and how those moms stepped forward to lead the discussion. They are the moms spearheading their school fund raisers, organizing the weekly play group, and answering questions posed by their mom networks about what birthday presents to buy, movies to see and apps to download.

Where are all the moms?

To some degree, the answer to that question depends on the ages of their children. For example, moms of older kids (ages nine to 12) index higher for conversations with other moms in the workplace, because many have returned to the workforce by the time their kids are in grade school. On the other end of the spectrum, moms of kids ages zero to three are more isolated and index higher for chatting with other moms online. But for the greatest number of moms (58%) across all age spectrums, those quick conversations at daycare or school drop-off and pick-up time present the biggest opportunity to network with other moms.

What motivates moms to make a recommendation? Not surprisingly, special offers are at the top of the list for most moms (61%). Close behind is the sense of pride (51%) and fun (54%) that comes from being the mom that others turn to for advice. Third-party reviews (32%) and causes (31%) also spur moms to make recommendations. Since discounting is not a sustainable strategy for most brands, and it can diminish brand value, marketers should focus on getting the mom message right—what will be fun for moms to engage with, and how can you empower moms to share their experience?

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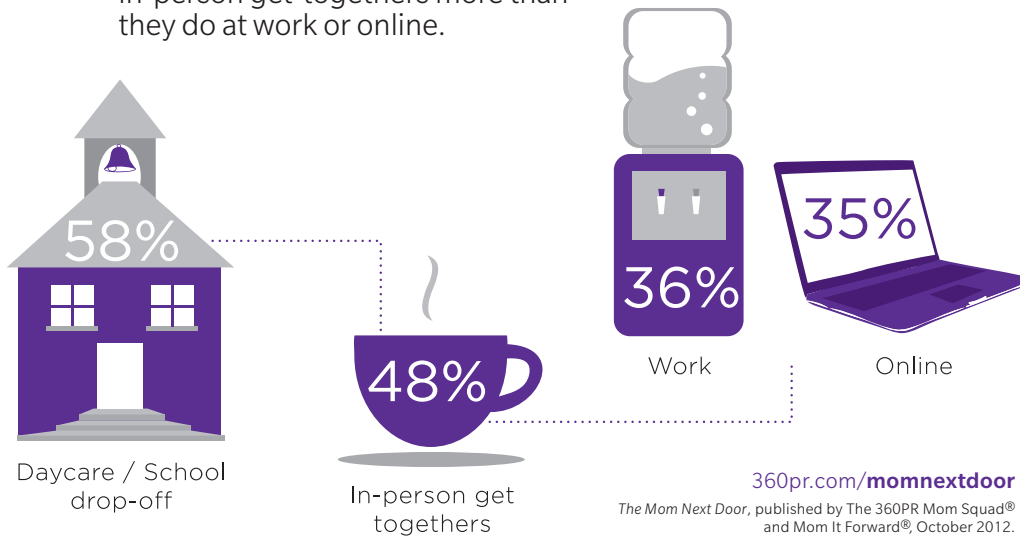


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Where Moms Meet-Up

Moms chat each other up at school drop-off and in-person get-togethers more than they do at work or online.



moms we surveyed. But if your brand is aimed at moms of younger kids (zero to three), social media plays a more important role, as moms of younger children spend two or more hours on social media networks each day.

Facebook is tops with moms by a landslide. A full 86% of the women we surveyed use Facebook, followed by YouTube (25%) and Pinterest (24%), which just edged out Twitter (21%). Notably, moms said they like using Pinterest not just as a social network, but also as an organization tool for keeping what-to-try-and-buy lists within easy reach.

The good news for brands is that 77% of moms said they like or follow a brand on one or more platforms, with four in 10 following more than six. And a third of moms said they're reading social media updates made by others, but not actively sharing their thoughts. The key for brands is to find ways to celebrate those who do

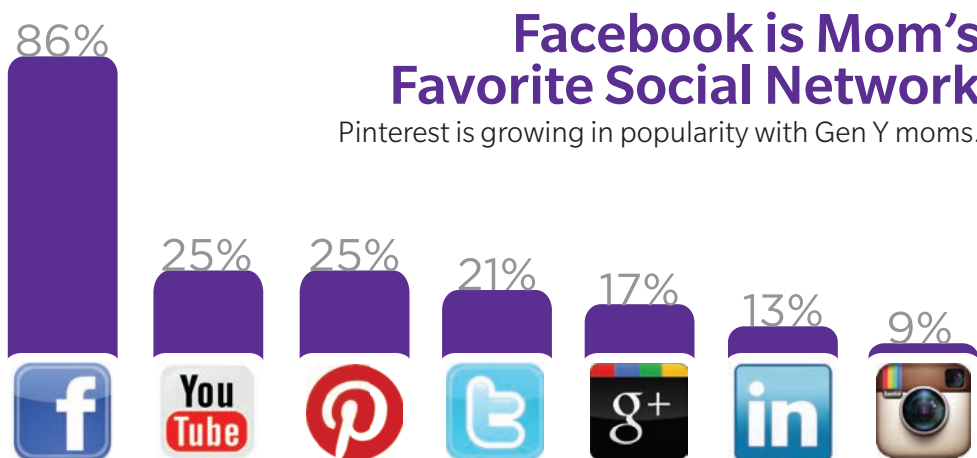
their networks. Email lists like Parent Talk Yahoo! are also popular with moms—giving them ready access to hundreds of moms in their local community and “a wealth of information,” as one mom commented.

Getting in on the mom-versation

There's a lot of opportunity to become part of the frequent conversations moms engage in about brands. Moms who attended our in-home focus groups described doing their brand homework as a three-part process: They start by talking to other moms off-line, then go online to conduct research, and finally return to their mom circles off-line to double-check their research and make their purchasing decisions. For more considered, bigger-ticket purchases, moms are willing to take their time and do more research. “I would rather wait two weeks and have more opportunities to have conversations like this one,” explained a mom at one of our focus groups.

Brands can be an important resource throughout this process, offering moms access to experts on brand channels and through higher-touch communications such as in-home, retail and other events close to where moms live. From a resources standpoint, it's inconceivable for a brand to interact one-to-one with every mom, but brands can achieve scale and success by building a network of moms next door.

Laura Tomasetti is CEO of 360 Public Relations, whose clients include children's media, toy and video game leaders. Tomasetti heads the 360PR MomSquad®, a national panel of influencer-moms. Reach her at ltomasetti@360pr.com. For more on *The Mom Next Door* study, visit www.360PR.com/momnextdoor.



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The Mom Next Door, published by The 360PR Mom Squad® and Mom It Forward®, October 2012.

FANNY FOOZLE

The Four Leaf Fantuckle Festival



Created by Emmy Award-winning
music composer Rich Dickerson.

Fanny Foozle is a series of interactive children ebook apps. Each **Fanny Foozle** app adventure is based on a letter from the alphabet for a series of apps running from A to Z. Such as **Fanny Foozle and the Four Leaf Fantastic Fantuckle Festival!**

Fanny Foozle is pink and lives in the town of Flamboozle with her foodle dog Sam. In each app she finds a solution to adventures that lead to lessons and challenges that happen amongst her friends and the characters in the town of Flamboozle. **Fanny Foozle** bounces, waddles, slides, rhymes and sings her way through the town of Flamboozle and into our hearts.

Fanny Foozle ebook app available for FREE at the iTunes app store.

Visit: www.fannyfoozle.com

Contact: Rich Dickerson 310 709 5323 or richaether@me.com



the gaps between what devices are being used for continue to get smaller and smaller. That said, each device still delivers unique strengths. iPod Touch is still the best device for listening to music, and the iPad continues to lead for streaming TV shows/movies and reading. iPhones are tops for photo/video capturing, and the iPhone and iPod Touch lead in overall communications (texting, phone calls). As these gaps shrink, it will be interesting to see how consumer behavior continues to shift across devices.

Across the board, there are fewer gender and age differences than seen in previous years. The gender gap continues to narrow, and preschoolers' usage has now either caught up to or surpassed six to 11s for several activities. Preschoolers are now more likely to take/look at photos and videos, do creative activities, use educational apps, and read on their iDevices. Not only has their usage surpassed six to 11s, but they're tapping into these devices more frequently. Preschoolers now use more apps on the iDevices they access, and they use their apps more often (especially on the iPhone) than ever before.

There are a few emerging trends in the category worth noting. Generally, kids are listening to more music on their devices, with six to 11s using the iPhone and iPod Touch more for music, and three to fives listening more via the Touch. While iTunes is still the most popular way to listen to music on iDevices, streaming radio sites such as Pandora, iHeart Radio and Spotify have shown movement in the past year.

Texting is more dominant than ever for school-age communications. For example, kids six to 11 are increasingly using the iPod Touch to text, with that device having now reached iPhone levels (another example of how the activity trumps the device it's delivered on). This age group is also increasingly likely to text while watching TV and send pictures to friends and family via text.

e-Reading is an increasingly standard way for preschoolers to access books, and self-expression is a growing need for iDevices. Looking more closely at the trend of self-expression, there was a noticeable uptick in the use of photo/video capturing apps since the last wave of research. Not only has picture/video capturing on iDevices increased across the board, but this particular activity has jumped so much for preschoolers that their usage now exceeds six to 11s. Considering the rise in popularity of apps like Instagram (and similar ones), this is certainly a trend worth watching in the coming year. **K**

This concludes our report on kids and iDevices. Next month, Kaleidoscope will explore the role of sports in kids' lives.

For more information, contact kaleidoscope@nick.com

(Source: Touchstone Research, October 2012. Sample Size: N = 1384 kids ages three to 11; analysis by Smarty Pants and Nickelodeon Digital Consumer Insights)

A major focus of the Brand and Consumer Insights Department at Nickelodeon Kids & Family is to live and breathe kid culture. We continually track and identify trends, and explore what it means to be a kid and teen today. In an effort to keep you in touch with our audience and give a voice to our consumer, we've created the Nickelodeon Kaleidoscope. Every month, Kaleidoscope will capture key areas of interest across the kid and family cultural landscape, provide an understanding of attitudes and behaviors, and report on trends and buzz.

iLove Them

Nickelodeon takes a look at kids' ongoing love affair with all things iDevices

BY ERIN MILLER

The relationship that today's kid has with mobile technology is unparalleled. As the category's offerings continue to expand, and user penetration grows, the industry is faced with keeping abreast of this rapidly changing landscape. As a follow-up to our 2011 mobile study, *Let's Get Personal*, Nick Digital Consumer Insights, in partnership with Smarty Pants and Touchstone Research, has launched the second wave of its mobile study, *iLove Them: Kids' Use of iDevices*. This time around, we've dedicated our efforts to tracking and understanding the usage patterns, attitudes and all around love for the coveted Apple devices amongst kids ages three to 11.

Each device is distinct in its own right, offering unique features, advantages and functions. As more and more kids turn to iDevices for their content, it's become clear that kids are more likely to seek out specific content and activities, regardless of the device that delivers them. Because their choices in content, or activity, trumps their device choices,

Road master

New York preschooler Graham is obsessed with the world of wheels



Five-year-old Graham, from New York, is head over heels for wheels. “I’m a fan of cars. It’s my favorite thing to do. I can go really fast when I’m driving,” he says.

But what Graham is really doing is mastering the rules of the road. Vehicle play gives kids (boys and girls) a very visceral sense of control and power—action happens entirely because they make it so. As he wheels his cars and trucks around, Graham is also tuning up his fine motor skills and gaining a very organic understanding of physics, including inertia and cause-and-effect. If his speedster takes a wrong turn, Graham understands that it will crash, which is part of the fun.

Like many kids his age, Graham started out with the easy stuff—rolling his cars and trucks on the floor. Later, he advanced to using tracks and constructing his own roadways. As he describes, “I build roads with my Legos and drive my cars on them.” Now that he has mastered building skills, Graham has begun taking on more challenging tasks, including building his own models, using remote control cars, and maneuvering cars in apps and video games. “I like the Hot Wheels game. And I play Lightning McQueen.”

In fact, Graham so craves further challenge and mastery in his vehicle play that he seeks out online demonstrations on YouTube. “I usually go to Cars and Hot Wheels videos. Grownups actually open up the toys and review the whole toy!” By seeing the models featured, Graham learns ways to enhance his play, like high-speed racing techniques, more elaborate track configurations, and ways to share his experiences with others.

The vehicle category has done a great job of leveling the challenges in play experiences to foster a continuous flow of mastery. As kids age, media and technology can spark ideas and amplify the experience, potentially keeping them in high gear longer. —Sarah Chumsky



Insight Kids is a research and strategic consulting company dedicated to catalyzing our clients to build innovative, impactful and inspiring experiences for kids and families. To be further inspired by Reagan and Insight Kids, visit www.insightstrategygroup.com/insightkids/.

Cool or Not? The new vs. old-school amusements edition



Furby

Boys 8 to 11 (201)	Girls 8 to 11 (216)	Boys 12 to 15 (178)	Girls 12 to 15 (210)		Boys 8 to 11 (281)	Girls 8 to 11 (284)	Boys 12 to 15 (284)	Girls 12 to 15 (290)
10.9%	30.1%	10.1%	8.1%	Totally way cool *	26.3%	55.3%	9.9%	23.4%
4.5%	13.4%	3.4%	2.4%	Very cool *	14.9%	19.7%	11.6%	24.5%
11.9%	19%	15.2%	23.3%	Kinda cool *	31.3%	19%	27.8%	32.8%
19.4%	10.2%	24.7%	21.9%	Not cool *	11.7%	1.8%	27.1%	11%
53.2%	27.3%	46.6%	44.3%	Totally un-cool *	15.7%	4.2%	23.6%	8.3%
29.7%	24.7%	38.2%	28.6%	Don't know what it is	2.8%	1.4%	2.1%	0.3%



Doing Art/
Craft Projects

* Excludes “Don’t know what it is” responses



Cool or Not? is part of KidSay’s Year End 2012 Trend Tracker. These one-of-a-kind research reports are published 10 times a year and provide a quantitative and qualitative picture of kids’ likes, dislikes and trends gathered through in-school surveys with US kids ages five to 15. Contact Bob Reynolds (913-390-8110 or bob@kidsay.com).

The acquisition of Lucasfilm and its crown jewel, Star Wars, makes media giant Disney the proud owner of four of the five top entertainment licenses in the US. (Hello Kitty, you may want to watch your back now.) While it's dominated the girls toy and consumer products space for some time, thanks to Disney Princess and the Marvel portfolio, the Lucasfilm buy is poised to make Disney the biggest player in the boys action category. With unprecedented bargaining power when it comes to licensing and retail partners in the offing, how will Disney use the Force?

CHANNELLING THE FORCE

BY GARY RUSAK



On

October 30, 2012, George Lucas announced that he had agreed to sell his namesake company as a whole for an estimated US\$4.05 billion to The Walt Disney Corporation. The deal included Lucasfilm's live-action production business, along with its Industrial Light & Magic studio, Skywalker Sound audio operation and the Indiana Jones IP. However, those were just extraordinary perks for Disney. It's widely acknowledged that the entity's multibillion-dollar valuation rested on the shoulders of Lucasfilm's crown jewel, Star Wars. The headline-grabbing part of the deal announcement was news that Disney would start production on three new Star Wars films based on creator Lucas's original nine-episode outline, with the first film of the trilogy hitting theaters in 2015. For the entertainment industry, though, the ramifications of the sale run much deeper than that.

The pre-Halloween timing of the announcement perhaps also raised the question of whether or not the mega-deal would ultimately turn out to be more trick than treat for the globe's single biggest entertainment company and for Star Wars' legion of fans. The publicly traded behemoth, under Bob Iger's leadership, has been no stranger to making major acquisitions in the last decade. In fact, in 2009 Disney shelled out US\$4.26 billion to acquire Marvel Entertainment and its extensive library of iconic characters. Prior to that, Disney paid more than US\$7 billion to acquire Pixar. Certainly deals of this magnitude are always future-focused, and conclusions about their impact and ultimate worth can't be drawn in the short-term. The final accounting of this most recent move will take years to calculate for the entertainment licensing and consumer products industry. However, with the help of industry insiders and financial analysts, it is worthwhile to take a look at the attendant risks, rewards and ramifications as The Mouse takes over The Force.

Surprised, you are "I thought it was an April Fools' Day story," says Zaki Hasan, professor of Media Studies at Foothill College in Los Altos Hills, California and author of the book *Geek World*. "It was so surreal."

To be fair, rumors about Lucas possibly relinquishing complete control of his private empire had started circulating in early 2012 when he announced his retirement from producing "blockbuster films." They were further fuelled by the appointment of Kathleen Kennedy as co-chair of Lucasfilm about six months later. With a succession plan already in place, it seemed logical to expect Lucas would be stepping back from the day-to-day operations of his business. But even with these clues laid out, it was still a stretch to think that Lucas—by most accounts an industry outsider and a hands-on creator (or control freak, depending on who you ask)—would sell his baby to the biggest corporate entertainment company in the world.

"I think everyone was taken by surprise in the industry," says Sanjay Sood, associate professor of Marketing at UCLA Anderson School of Business. "There was a feeling out there that George Lucas was anti-big business, so that is why most people were surprised."



While Star Wars is an unqualified hit in the toy aisle, analysts believe there's room to grow the business in secondary categories

Culture change? Luckily, recent history might provide clues as to how Disney will incorporate its newest acquisition into the fold. Evidence suggests that the fears of hardcore Star Wars fanboys are unfounded.

"Immediately after the announcement, you saw pictures online of Mouse ears on Tatooine," notes Martin Brochstein, SVP of industry relations and information for the International Licensing Industry Merchandisers Association (LIMA). "That was the first-blush emotional response, but it didn't really have any basis in history."

Neil Friedman, former president of Toys 'R' Us and Mattel Brands and current member of the TIA and LIMA boards, notes that Disney has a strong track record of not diluting or tainting the culture of the companies it acquires.

"Look what happened with Marvel," he says. "*Avengers* was really outstanding. Disney is definitely smart enough to make entertainment that understands who its consumer base and viewership is, and I think it will utilize people who know how to make the proper entertainment for the franchise."

David W. Miller, a veteran media and entertainment analyst at L.A.-based independent investment bank B. Riley & Company, agrees that Disney has shown an understanding of when to employ its brand as an umbrella and when its presence is a possible detractor.

"That is Bob Iger's legacy and tutelage," he says. "Pixar is wholly owned, but it has been left pretty much stand-alone. The culture seems to still be the same there, and it has never produced a [big-screen] bomb. In an industry where there is constant failure upwards, that is just incredible."

High stakes The one thing set to have the biggest impact on the success or failure of the deal is, of course, the next feature film instalment of the Star Wars saga. Tentatively slated for a 2015 release, the movie, known only as *Episode 7*, is based on the original nine-part story outline developed by Lucas himself.

"On the first weekend that the film comes out, there will be a lot of judging and jurying about what Disney paid," notes Miller. Before that point, though, the crucial decisions around casting and the director will already have been assessed with fervor.

"When they choose a director, it will make a statement to the fanbase," says Jim Silver, editor-in-chief of TimeToPlay.com





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and long-time follower of the children's entertainment industry. "It's an important decision. Is it going to be a Disney director or a fanboy-approved one?"

Early rumors have *Lost* creator and captain of the rebooted Star Trek franchise J.J. Abrams as a possibility, as well as *Lord of the Rings* auteur Peter Jackson and Pixar stalwart Brad Bird. And it's been confirmed that *Empire Strikes Back* and *Return of the Jedi* writer Lawrence Kasdan has signed on as a creative producer.

"Kasdan will generate some goodwill," says Foothill College's Hasan. "But the director and casting for that movie is really the four-billion-dollar question."

While Lucas will be on-board as a creative consultant for the next instalment of the series, he will not be helming the project. The next film, in fact, will be the furthest Lucas has strayed from creative control of a big-screen Star Wars project (although he did not direct *Empire Strikes Back* or *Return of the Jedi*). This fact does not necessarily strike fear into the hearts of Star Wars devotees.

"The general consensus is that the prequels represent tremendous missed opportunities at deepening the storylines," says Hasan. "I would argue that the prequels actually cheapened the brand by not being as good as they could have been...Lucas burned a lot of bridges with the prequels and the fourth instalment of Indiana Jones."

Tuna Amobi, director at Standard & Poor's Capital IQ's Equity Research Services, says from a financial standpoint the riskiest part of the deal is the execution of the first movie. "Disney really can't afford a misfire," he says. "There is narrow room for error. The price was so ample that Disney will have to execute flawlessly to take advantage of all the synergies."

Unlike Marvel, with its scores of different IP, the entire Lucas deal is pretty much riding on the next Star Wars film. "It doesn't matter how rich the character IP is," says Miller. "The burden is still on the studio to make a good movie."

And the relatively tight timeline the movie faces is the first challenge for Disney as it takes the reins. "If Disney changes the typical release date for a Star Wars film, which has always been Memorial Day [late May], the studio will hear it from the fanbase," says Silver. "So you are only looking at two years and five months to get everything done and toys on the shelf."

According to Friedman, an 18- to 24-month lead time should be sufficient to develop and rollout the toys with lots of room for big promotional activity. However, if Disney is going to hit that Memorial Day 2015 target, the clock is certainly ticking.

"I expect Disney to make a director announcement around Toy Fair (this month) or sometime early in 2013," say Silver.

Licensing expansion It's not exactly a trade secret that the majority of revenue generated by Star Wars right now is derived from consumer products licensing. According to industry trade *The Licensing Letter*, Star Wars was the second-largest entertainment license in 2012, generating US\$1.5 billion at US retail.

As a private company, Lucasfilm does not release earnings information, but it reportedly grossed an estimated

US\$200 million in licensing royalties in 2011. Impressive earnings, especially given the fact that there has not been a Star Wars movie in theaters since 2005.

However, there has been a successful series on Cartoon Network that has helped keep the Star Wars brands relevant. *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* debuted in 2008 and is just celebrating its 100th episode.

"There is no doubt that the value of the show was incorporated into the overall price," adds Miller.

By comparison, Disney Consumer Products generated about US\$3.49 billion in 2012, a number that has climbed steadily over the last three years. "Disney has a strong competency in consumer products," says Amobi, noting that Lucasfilm's CP revenue is primarily driven by action-figure sales in North America. "It's an area where Lucasfilm has significantly under-leveraged."

Silver suggests that with the exception of the co-branded Lego line, Star Wars' visibility in the marketplace has dimmed without the spotlight of a blockbuster movie to illuminate it.

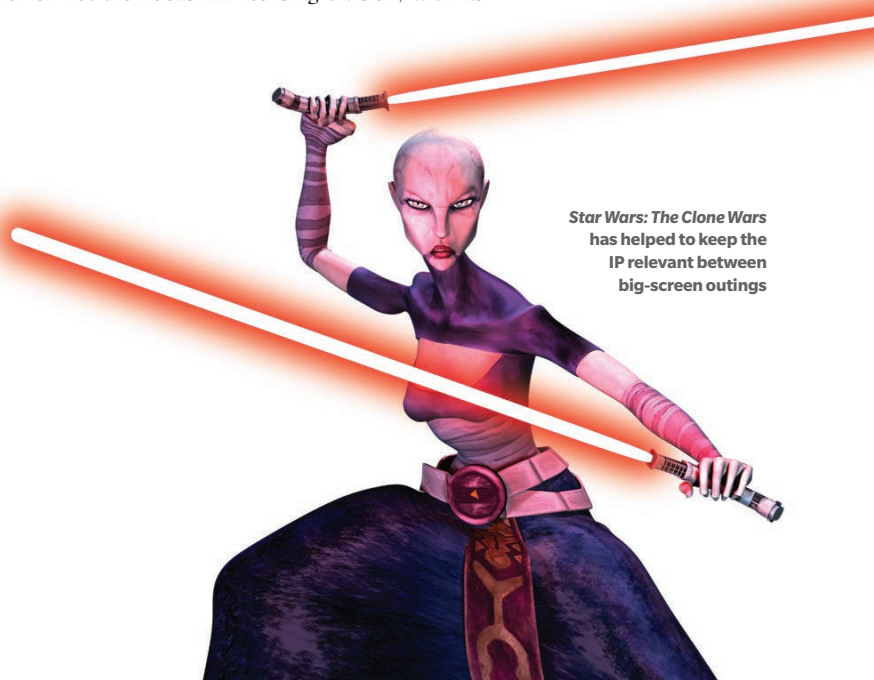
"Star Wars' awareness factor is going to grow tenfold now," he says. "A new Disney-backed trilogy will be the jolt the franchise needs."

Amobi believes that, in tandem with producing the first new movie in a decade, Disney will work to centralize Lucasfilm's current roster of international third-party licensing agents and further extend the Star Wars brand internationally into secondary categories, where there is potential for significant growth. And if any company can take a well-known and long-exploited property and create even more value from it, it's Disney, he says.

"No company does licensing like Disney," Amobi adds, citing its success in creating franchises around Pixar properties like Cars and Toy Story. "It will likely bring [the existing third-party partnerships] in-house and leverage the infrastructure it has built."

A similar move occurred with the Pixar consumer products division, which was easily rolled into Disney's operations after that.

LIMA's Brochstein says it is an open question as to whether or not the Lucasfilm licensing division, with its



Star Wars: *The Clone Wars* has helped to keep the IP relevant between big-screen outings

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unique outlying and mercurial nature, will be easily subsumed by Disney Consumer Products. “Will there be a separate Lucasfilm licensing organization that maintains a separate identity and creative operation? That’s a long-term question.”

While reports indicate that Hasbro’s long-term and lucrative master toy relationship with Lucasfilm will continue, the same can’t be said for existing deals made with smaller licensees—the next 12 to 24 months will tell the tale.

“There are some companies that work with Lucasfilm that have never had a relationship with Disney,” explains Silver. “They could either enhance their relationships with Disney, or Disney might just turn to companies it is more familiar with. It could work both ways.”

Friedman contends that competent and lucrative Lucasfilm licensees have nothing to worry about because Disney will not undertake a complete overhaul of an already-successful business relationship.

“Typically when these deals are done, I don’t think Disney would make any big changes on the licensee side,” he says. “It will look to continue producing entertainment at a high level, and that will be good for licensees and retailers. It will look at who licensees are, and if they are good, I don’t see why Disney would make a change.”

Boosting retail and consumer presence The other part of the licensing equation is retail. While Star Wars products haven’t had much problem getting onto shelves in North America, it’s safe to assume that retail relationships will only be enhanced by the new parent company.

“With Disney, you have had Toy Story and Cars, so from a product perspective there have been holes to fill,” says Miller. “With Marvel, and now Lucasfilm, Disney has essentially become a one-stop shop for category-killer mass-market retailers looking to acquire merchandise for little boys and girls.”

Lisa Marks, president of Port Chester, New York-based licensing and marketing agency Lisa Marks and Associates, says the deal certainly makes Disney a “mightier force” at retail. But she argues that Star Wars was already an established brand in North America, so she isn’t worried that smaller properties will be forced out of the US retail landscape.

“There are so many retailers out there and room for all sorts of different properties and products,” she says. “In a way, it might create opportunities for others because there is one less big player.”

Brochstein agrees that adding Star Wars to Disney’s extensive roster won’t dramatically alter the retail landscape. “Does it ratchet up Disney’s power a degree or two? Yes, but it’s not that big a change,” he says, adding that Disney already has a powerful voice at retail.

One factor that hasn’t gotten a lot of attention is what Star Wars has to gain through Disney’s own retail distribution channels. With 360 international locations, the recently revamped Disney Store could become a physical hub for Star Wars products—a retail option that has been unexplored by Lucasfilm thus far. Additionally, it is easy to imagine much

more Star Wars merchandise finding its way onto the retail shelves located at Disney theme parks throughout the world.

“The merchandise that is moved at the theme parks is often overlooked, but it’s substantial,” says Silver.

With Disney’s theme park sales representing nearly 30% of the company’s revenue, the deal is likely to provide another vast and deep source of content to keep its parks and holiday business fresh.

Interestingly, Iger and Lucas initially met to discuss the renewal of the Star Tours: The Adventures Continue attraction. (It is currently in operation at DisneyWorld’s Hollywood Studio and Disneyland and is slated to open in Toyko Disneyland later this year.) It stands to reason that Disney will draw upon the saga’s rabid fanbase to add similar attractions to its parks and bolster revenue outside of box-office receipts and consumer products areas.

“I’m sure you’ll see Darth Vader walking around the park and all that other stuff,” says Miller.

Silver believes that the overall boost to the theme park revenue might take awhile to gestate, but it could ultimately be a significant source of growth.

“It could be huge,” he says. “You have SeaWorld and Universal Studios, and if you look at their customers, they are older. But with Disney bringing in more Star Wars attractions over the next five years or so, the parks will be drawing in older kids, fanboys and their families. It’s a whole new crowd.”

The deal also further augments Disney’s film library, which may just have sweetened the pot in a new arrangement with Netflix. The streaming service is reportedly going to pay Disney US\$350 million a year for first-window rights to its content starting in 2016. While the first new Star Wars movie likely won’t fall under the agreement, the understanding is that the back-catalogue and future releases will.


“There are a lot of opportunities with a library like that,” says Amobi. “The new revenue streams will be beneficial.”

Other potentially overlooked opportunities include the dormant Indiana Jones IP, which could be revived in one form or another, and the special effects and sound studio. But most analysts agree that these pieces are “gravy” and were not included in the US\$4.05 billion valuation.

It be a perpetual franchise, hmm? All experts surveyed agree that the crux of the deal is whether or not under Disney’s management the Star Wars franchise can remain relevant and prosperous and grow beyond the mythology created in Lucas’s original nine-episode outline.

“The brand is in orbit around the saga,” says Hasan. “The saga is a finite thing. So now we are going to see how it goes from something like The Godfather trilogy to something like the James Bond franchise.”

The James Bond comparison—an IP that has spawned 23 movies over 50 years—also came to mind for UCLA’s Sood.

“Most franchises don’t last beyond the third or fourth film,” he says. “Star Wars has six, and will have nine, but after that what happens? Can it keep going like James Bond? That is Iger’s challenge.” 

“It doesn’t matter how rich the character IP is, the burden is still on the studio to make a good movie.”

—David W. Miller,
media and entertainment
analyst for B. Riley & Company



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- JibJab's **Gregg Spiridellis** explains why the company's new IP StoryBots hits the right mark with its target
- Game designer and blogger **Carla Engelbrecht Fisher** on the sensitive subject of collecting kids' data
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